

Gifted by The Tozier Wheeler Twins (omfgiminlovewithneeks)

Category: IT (2017), Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: Alternate Universe - Superheroes/Superpowers, Crossover, F/M, First Crush, First Kiss, First Meetings, I have 13 kids here so there will be a lot of pairings, M/M, My First Fanfic, OOC since we have different background stories, One-Sided Attraction, Other, POV Alternating, Richie Tozier and Mike Wheeler Are Twins, Superpowers, always wanted to try a superpower au, and thanks Charmed for being the origin of this whole idea, but only for about 2-3 chapters so I don't want to falsely advertise by tagging them, but romance is not the main theme of this fic so there's that, do you know how difficult it is to write about 13 main/recurring characters?, okay so basically this is my first fic ever, one-sided Mileven to be exact, thanks Heroes for the same reason, thanks Marvel/DC for the abundance of abilities to choose from, there are characters from other fandom as well

Language: English

Characters: Ben Hanscom, Beverly Marsh, Bill Denbrough, Billy Hargrove, Dustin Henderson, Eddie Kaspbrak, Eleven (Stranger Things), Henry Bowers, Lucas Sinclair, Maxine "Max" Mayfield, Mike Hanlon, Mike Wheeler, Patrick Hockstetter, Richie Tozier, Stanley Uris, The Losers Club (IT), The Stranger Things Kids, Will Byers

Relationships: Bill Denbrough & Eddie Kaspbrak, Bill Denbrough/St Stanley Uris, Eddie Kaspbrak/Richie Tozier, Eleven | Jane Hopper & Beverly Marsh & Maxine "Max" Mayfield, Eleven | Jane Hopper/Mike Wheeler (one-sided), Richie Tozier & Mike Wheeler, Richie Tozier & Stanley Uris, Will Byers & Mike Wheeler, Will Byers/Mike Wheeler

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Summary:

Things aren't so bright for a teenager with superpowers, because the world doesn't know you exist, the government is secretly hunting you down, and best case scenario, your family thinks you're dead.

OR

The story where a bunch of kids broke out of a secret containment facility.

1. The Explosion

Author's Note:

Okay guys so hello and welcome to my first fic ever. The idea to write this fic started one day when I was thinking about El, Max, and Bev being The Charmed Ones (what's with El's Telekinesis and arguably Astral Projection to wherever it is that she finds people in). Abilities are selected based on my interpretation of character's personality/habit from the series/movie/book, and my effort not to make them too OP. I've already seen some similar ideas for some characters already, but I'm not planning to borrow ideas from anyone's fic (I can't say the same for the mentioned shows in my tags).

Also, I don't own any of the characters from Stranger Things or IT.

Anyway, enjoy.

Summary for the Chapter:

The chaos began with an explosion.

[...]

Beverly was glad to have company, especially one her age.

[...]

The vision started at noon.

Notes for the Chapter:

[Updated on Feb 18th, '19]

Can't believe how horrible my writing was a year ago.

I've tried to make it a little more tolerable now. Hope you guys won't cringe as much.

#057

The chaos began with an explosion.

Tonight, as per usual, he had been lying on his bed, mulling over his old life, his old freedom. He missed his house, his parents, his neatly organized room with a shelf full of books to spend his evenings. He missed the sunlight, and how its warmth seeped through the fibers of his clothes on a lazy summer day, while he was lying on the grass at the park near his house.

But above all, he missed his best friend. His best friend, whom he had spent almost every single day with, ever since the first day of kindergarten. His best friend who, despite being overly energized and unable to stand still for height measurement, agreed to tag along to his “fucking boring activity that exists as a sorry excuse for lazy asses to tell others they have done something during the summer”, as endearingly dubbed. His best friend who, the winter before, had suddenly disappeared without a trace, and who nobody had ever heard from again. The police had many theories, from “getting lost in the wood” to “being caught by a child trafficker”, but they all led to dead ends.

Last summer, his parents, wanting to cheer him up somehow, offered to sign him up for a one-week camping trip at Yellowstone National Park with other kids his age. He should have refused. He should have never agreed to leave the house. But all his life he had never been to another region. His small town was in the middle of nowhere in the Asphodel Region, and therefore, the thought of going on a camping trip in the great Olympia Region intrigued him mildly. As a result, he had agreed to go and had spent the first two days at camp participating in mildly interesting activities.

The third day, however, he had woken up restrained in a hospital bed, with a promise that none of his family would ever find him again, and a new life of constantly being prodded and experimented

on. Apparently, he was one of the very few individuals who, somehow, had acquired special abilities, or as the scientists said, was “gifted”. And the scientists wanted to study these gifts, see how they work, how they manifested, and how those who have them could be controlled. Since then, he had spent 6 months in a 70 sq.ft cell, occasionally being dragged around for experimenting, and sometimes being transferred from one lab to another. Each cell was modified to nullify or contain the abilities of their respective residents, and there were traps that could be activated manually should another kid like him manage to disable all the guards. That was all he had found out during his time being held captive.

Being deep in thought, he almost had a heart attack when an explosion shook his cell. But with it came a satisfying tingling sensation on the tip of his fingers. *My powers* , he thought with a smirk. The explosion must have damaged his cell somehow, and his powers washed over him as if they had been held back by an invisible dam that had now broken. He put his hand on the wall, feeling each and every microchip in the building. *Technokinesis* , so they say. Basically, he could manipulate any electronic device or anything that had a chip in it, and right now, that was his ticket out of here. With a snap of his fingers, he commanded all the cell doors to open and all the security cameras to shut down, before rushing out of the room.

Outside his room, he heard distant yelling and gunshots from where he suspected the source of the explosion was, so naturally, he headed towards the opposite direction. For the first minute or two, the path he took was pretty uneventful. Most of the guards must have been drawn to whomever had caused that explosion or encountered another powered individual. His thought was proven correct when he took the next right turn and ran into a girl, standing over 3 unconscious guards laying around the 10 ft wide hallway, as if they had just decided to bash their heads against one another until they all passed out. The girl turned to him with a deep hatred in her eyes, but that quickly dropped when she realized he was in the same scrub as her. He approached her slowly as her blue eyes scanned him cautiously. She was around his height, with beautiful ginger hair and

a thin figure. He spotted a small number on her wrist, right where his number read **057** . *I guess it's better to have allies* , he thought before offering her his hand.

“Wanna team up?” he asked.

She kept her eyes on him for several extra seconds before raising her hand to shake his with a slight smile. They then both headed towards the now obstacle-free hallway.

“Hi, I’m Stan. Technopath. I guess I opened the cell doors?” Stan said, raising his voice near the end. He wasn’t sure if he should start the small talk, or if she would want to separate as soon as they’re outside.

Luckily, she gave him a small amusing huff, so Stan assumed it was okay to talk to her.

Beverly , her voice sounded in Stan’s head. *Telepath* .

#065

Beverly was glad to have company, especially someone her age.

Sometimes while she was being tested in the previous lab, there would be a boy about her age in the room as well. Not as a target for her though, since none of her powers would work on him. He was there, as the scientists had put it, to “amplify” her powers. Whenever he put his hand on her shoulder, she felt more powerful, like a new wave of energy had washed over her. She could also use her ability more smoothly and could do things she hadn't been able to do by herself. They were never allowed to talk, so she only knew him by the number on his wrist. **024** . If the number indicated the capture order of the subjects, he must have been here for a lot longer than she had.

Besides the boy she saw in the Power Room, the name she gave the room where she was forced to use her powers mostly on brain-damaged targets, either to read their mind or memory, she had also met a few other “psychics” in a room she had dubbed The Playground. The Playground was the room where they put psionic users like her together to see if something would happen when they interacted. But as far as Beverly could tell, it wasn’t much. Psionic users could highly resist other psionic attacks, and they could also detect other psionic users targeting them. So whenever another user successfully targeted her (usually it was a girl who could create illusions - 008), she could retaliate immediately. They never hurt each other, only playing some harmless pranks back and forth. They all knew who the real enemy was, and even if they weren’t friends, they were sure as hell allies. However, Bev did make a new friend in The Playground. A small clairvoyant named *Will* . Will was quiet but friendly, and there was something about him that made Beverly feel like she could trust him immediately. They had spent a lot of time talking to each other. Not in The Playground, though, since neither of them had wanted to give those scientists the satisfaction of having something to record.

One of the perks of being a clairvoyant and a telepath was, being able to astral project yourself. That was like sending your consciousness away onto another plane, while your body physically remained wherever it had been. She and Will had called that plane The Void, since there was nothing there besides their consciousness. That power wasn’t contained by the cells they were locked in, because, in a way, they weren’t pushing their powers outside of the room, but rather pushing themselves onto another dimension. They had kept it a secret, and if the guards checked the security footage, they’d just see two kids sleeping in their respective beds.

Nearly two months ago, she had been transferred from her previous lab, the one with The Playground, to this current lab. At first, she had been afraid she would get lonely again, since she suspected there was a range to this mutual astral projection ground. However, her worry had later been dismissed when Will had informed her that he would be coming to her facility after a few days (bless him and his occasional future-telling visions). The kids had talked to each other a lot. They had told each other stories from their pasts, their hobbies,

the dreams they had once had, and pretty much anything to keep them from the four walls that were their reality.

Sometimes, if Will had a premonition, he'd tell Beverly, and the two of them would try to decipher that premonition together. Will's premonitions were usually blurry and confusing unless he has **024** to help him, and being held captive didn't give him many chances to go around and see if the visions had come true, but they had tried their best to understand Will's powers anyway. However, when Beverly had come to The Void to talk to Will today, he had only appeared briefly to tell her to save her strength, and that "something is going to happen soon", before severing the connection. Less than 5 minutes later, the explosion had come, and shortly after that, the door to her cell had opened.

All of this brought her to her current situation, which was her running towards an unseen exit alongside Stan. Stan, whose powers apparently had allowed him to mentally map down all electric circuits and, by extension, the general paths inside the lab. When Stan had mentioned that he could try to locate the nearest exit using his "map", Beverly had let out a small chuckle, because she wouldn't have to dig inside the guard's mind for a map of this place. Apparently, that statement had touched a nerve because Stan had suddenly turned awkward.

"So... Uhm... Beverly?" Stan started after a minute of silence or so, "I was wondering... if you're, like, always able to tell what everyone else is thinking?"

"Oh, that!" Beverly laughed, "Yeah, I could, but I try not to since it would be kind of impolite to do so". *Furthermore* ... She thought but didn't say anything.

That answer, however, was enough to ease Stan's worries, and he got back to his normal self (or whatever self he had been before that topic popped up). The next turn, however, left them both speechless. Scattered around the hallway were at least 20 unconscious guards, and at the end of the hallway, in front of a door that was clearly meant to be the exit, stood a brown-haired girl about Beverly's

height, facing said exit. She was... screaming at the door? Apparently, whatever her power was, she was trying (and failing) to open the door with it.

“Hey!” Stan called out to the girl after he had managed to recollect himself, which, turned out to be not a very good idea.

The brunette girl turned around, and immediately there was an invisible force slamming both Stan and Beverly to the wall. *Telekinesis, how wonderful* , thought Beverly.

“We’re... on... the same... side!” tried Stan, the invisible pressure obviously making it a bit difficult to talk.

After a moment of consideration (which felt a lot longer as they were on the receiving end of a telekinetic attack), the girl released them, and they both cautiously approached her.

“We can help you with that,” said Stan, while carefully placing a hand on the exit door. After a second, the door opened.

Beverly expected the girl to run off and disappear the moment the door opened, so she was caught by surprise when the brunette just eyed them warily. She decided it wouldn’t hurt to try.

“Hi, I’m Beverly, and this is Stan. We think we’ll have a better chance of escaping if we stick together. Would you like to join us?”

The girl stared at them both for an uncomfortable amount of time before giving Beverly a curt nod.

“Okay, then... What’s your name?” Stan tried carefully, as if not wanting to scare away a hurt animal.

Cue the staring.

“Well then,” Beverly said, scanning her figure and stopping at the number on her wrist, “how about, we call you Eleven?”

That triggered a reaction. The girl flinched in discomfort.

“How about,” Stan quickly interjected, “we call you El?”

More staring.

And then the girl nodded. This time more coyly than the last.

“Okay then, El,” Beverly said cheerfully, “let’s get out of this hellhole”.

Upon leaving the lab, they immediately saw the source of the explosion. About a hundred feet from the exit, there was a large hole on the side of the lab, undoubtedly a result of the blast. The damage was pretty destructive, with some of the watchtowers on top of the lab already being collapsed. One tower was also about to crumble, and the only thing that had been holding it up was...

An energy field?

Beverly realized with a gasp that there must have been someone under that tower, unable to run away.

“Guys!” Beverly cried, catching the attention of the other two. But then three things happened almost simultaneously.

The tower started to crumble, throwing debris down the energy shield and all around it. The energy shield flickered, and then disappeared. Something from the debris site shot up in the air and flew towards their direction like a cannonball.

It was a body.

“El! Quick! Can you catch that?” Beverly asked urgently, pointing at the figure.

El raised her hands and tried to slow the body down. *Probably doesn’t want to abruptly stop it so she won’t break anything*, thought Beverly. However, despite El’s efforts, the body still slammed into both girls and knocked them back a dozen feet.

The two girls laid on the ground with the body on top of them for a while, trying to catch their breaths. After assessing the damage and making sure nothing in their bodies was broken (badly bruised,

definitely), they both sat up and turned the body face-up.

It was a boy. He was still alive, Beverly could tell that much. No limbs in awkward shapes, so hopefully nothing was broken.

Beverly was about to suggest taking turns carrying the unconscious boy when she heard Stan's shaken voice from behind.

"R-Richie?"

#060

The vision started at noon.

Will had nothing to do besides mull over his old life, something he'd been doing constantly for the last three months. He had contemplated trying to talk to Bev in The Void, but had decided against it. *What if Bev is in the Power Room right now? What if I contacted her, and our secret got discovered by some wackos currently wiring her like a Christmas tree?* They had agreed on going to The Void after dinner because two kids sleeping after dinner was a lot less suspicious than during the day, should anyone watch the security footage.

So Will had sat there and thought about his life before everything had gone downhill for him. He had thought about how his mom, despite having to work even on Christmas and New Year's to provide for his family, had still managed to make the heartiest Christmas dinner. He had thought about his brother Jonathan, and his exquisite taste in music, always introducing him to the greatest songs of the generation. He had thought about his own love for drawing, and how he had managed to make every drawing unique, even if they had been of the same person, the same view, because nothing was the same when you drew it a second time. He had also thought about the

object of (most of) his drawings: his best friend Mike.

Mike, who had befriended him on the first day of kindergarten, when Will had been all alone and scared. Mike, who had always been there for him, helping him up, giving him the power to push through his childhood of getting picked on. Mike, whose family had moved away two years ago, taking along with them the only safe haven outside his family that he had known of, leaving only a promise of staying in touch. Mike, who had kept his promises until nine months ago, when he had abruptly disappeared without a note. Mike, whom he may or may not have recently admitted to himself of having a crush on for as long as he could remember. In Mike's last letters, he had mentioned that his twin brother had disappeared not long before, so he had probably needed time to heal. Will had never met Mike's twin brother, but somehow, whenever he drew them together, he always imagined Mike's brother wearing coke-bottle glasses. When Will had heard of the news, he started drawing them together more and more often, but he hadn't dared to send his drawings to Mike. The wound had been too fresh for that, and he had told himself when Mike started replying again, he would gradually mention the paintings. Sadly now, he'd never know whether Mike would like them or not, since even if Mike reached out again, he wouldn't be there to answer. That thought always brought tears to his eyes.

Just as the first teardrop fell onto his hand, the vision started. His visions had always been clouded and fragmented, and this time was no different. He saw two boys holding hands, both of them in the special suit the lab had made him wear whenever they had wanted to get some data on him. He couldn't make out their faces. Then the vision shifted to an explosion. Will could tell that this explosion wasn't one they could contain in whatever room they had contained the other kids' powers. Then it changed into Will and another kid running. Once again, Will couldn't tell what the kid looked like, but he knew he needed the kid for whatever was coming. Finally, he saw one of the two boys from his first vision. He couldn't explain how he knew that was the same boy, but he just knew. The boy was flying through a rain of meteorites. Just like that, the vision ended, leaving him with a dreadful feeling mixed with... excitement? He knew whatever that was about, it was going to happen really soon.

The vision continued to return in snippets when he blinked his eyes. Together with it, the feeling returned, stronger and stronger each time. It was so intense that, when Beverly reached out to him after dinner, he quickly shut her down after a brief warning that something was going to happen soon. Just as he closed the connection with Bev, the vision started again, not any clearer than the first. However, as he was looking at the meteorites, an explosion shook him awake, and he knew it was time to move.

As soon as the door to his cell swung open, Will started running. He didn't know where he was going, but he blindly trusted his feelings. At each intersection, he chose a direction to head in without a second thought and kept on running, until he bumped into someone and they both tumbled onto the ground.

"Get the fuck off me you son of a bitch! I'm not afraid of using my powers on you!" shrieked a voice, and someone started squirming under Will's body.

The poor boy whom Will had tackled had fallen face first onto the ground, and had managed to fight back immediately. Despite not seeing who had tackled him, he had kicked Will in the gut twice as a result.

"Hey, hey, calm down..." Will hastily said, getting off the boy and carefully raising both hands up.

The other boy, after being free and seeing Will was no bigger than himself, finally stopped squirming and looked at Will carefully.

"Hi, I'm Will. What's your name?" asked Will tentatively, suddenly aware that this boy was the one he should be traveling with.

"Eddie".

"Well, Eddie, I'm planning to get the hell out of here. Care to join?" asked Will with a grin, this time more confident than the last.

Eddie seemed to be having an internal debate for a while before nodding. Will extended his hand and Eddie took it cautiously. They helped each other up and Will started running, with Eddie following

closely.

“How do you know where we’re going?” asked Eddie, after Will had taken the fourth turn without so much as a glance.

“I don’t know. I’m just following my instincts”.

“You— What?” asked Eddie incredulously.

“Just trust me”.

“How am I supposed to trust you? I don’t even know you. As far as I can tell, you could be leading me to another maximum security cell,” yelled Eddie, though he kept following Will anyway. It was not like he had a better idea where they should be heading.

“Well, it’s kind of my power. I see stuff, I know things,” Will tried to explain, contemplating telling Eddie about his vision, but ultimately deciding not to.

“Cool power,” murmured Eddie.

“What about you? You were threatening me back then, should I be afraid?” asked Will jokingly.

“My power is healing,” said Eddie sheepishly, “but it’s really lame, I can’t even heal myself.”

“Well, yours is still cooler than mine. My visions are all blurry and most of the time I don’t even know what they mean until everything is done,” said Will, and the two boys started bonding over whose power was less impressive.

Will and Eddie got to the explosion site and climbed out of the lab just in time for Will to witness the last scene in his vision.

Which only strengthened Will’s argument that his visions sucked way more than Eddie’s inability to heal himself.

Under the collapsing watchtower, two figures were struggling to get out while the energy shield above their heads slowly crumbled. One seemed to be unconscious while the other kept trying to get them

both out of the collapse zone. As a final effort, the conscious boy wrapped the other one inside his energy field and sent the unconscious boy through the falling debris.

When he looked up, his eyes caught Will's.

Recognition sparked across both their faces.

Will had barely managed a scream when the tower crumbled onto Mike.

Notes for the Chapter:

I'll walk you through my choices for their powers:

+ Stan - Technokinesis/Technopathy (Technology Manipulation): According to the book, he likes it when things are logical, in order. To my interpretation, he likes to know how things work, like things to be as they should be, like to know things, and dislike uncertainty. Being able to control stuff that operates on 0s and 1s, true and false, with no grey areas, are as certain as it gets. Plus, being able to google anything is the closest I'll get to Omniscience. Honestly, if Clairvoyance didn't already have a better candidate, I'd give it to Stanley.

+ Beverly - Telepathy: Beverly's big issue was how people sexualized her at a really early age. I'm letting her feel more than people's gaze when they look at her.

+ Eleven - Telekinesis: Do I even have to say?

+ Will - Clairvoyance: Based on his ability to see into the Upside Down, I'm giving him the ability to see into the future, the past, the present, etc (basically seeing). Also, I thought it'd be cool if Will has something like Precognitive Artistry (draw the future like Isaac Mendez in Heroes)

+ Eddie - Healing: His hypochondria was enough to

guarantee him this ability. However, I need to do something to make him still afraid of being sick and being injured although he has healing power (hence the inability to heal himself)

+ Mike W - Flyrokinesis (Force-Field Manipulation): I feel like he really wanted to protect Eleven, Will, and basically all his friends, but he was made to sit back and wait every single time. Therefore I'm giving him the shield to protect. Better than that candle holder.

How does someone who has never lived in the US write a story that takes place in the US? Put them in an AU and call each region whatever name you like ;) That way you don't need to worry whether the area you chose has forest or desert or whatnot.

So the world I'm making is similar to North America, and is divided into 4 regions based loosely on the time zones and named after Greek Mythology: Atlantia (PST), Olympia (MST), Asphodia (CST), and Elysia (EST).

If there are requests, I'll probably explain some more about other stuff later.

2. The Town

Summary for the Chapter:

Dustin should have exercised more.

[...]

Max would've never thought wisecracking was something she'd do in this lab.

[...]

They had to move sooner than Bill had expected.

Notes for the Chapter:

Hello to my lovely people! The biweekly update has arrived!

To anyone reading chapter 1 before Jan 14th, I've added some notes at the end of that chapter, explaining my choices for the kids' abilities. Check that out if you haven't already.

Also, this chapter has references to 3 of my favorite books. Let's see how many you will get ;)

TW: Blood and mention of dead bodies (is that a thing?)

Disclaimer: I don't own any characters that appeared in this chapter.

Enjoy.

[Updated on April 8th, '19]

Dustin should have exercised more.

He had been exhausting himself ever since the cell door opened. Not knowing where to go, he kept running into guards and dead ends while trying to get out of the shit hole he had been locked in since forever. At first, fighting the guards had been a walk in the park. Literally. One of the things Dustin learned during his “stay” in these labs was that a gentle shove to a Kevlar could do more damage than a shotgun blast at close range when you moved at twice the speed of sound. He only needed to walk up to each guard, give them a little push, and they would all be thrown back like they had been hit on the stomach by a sledgehammer. However, he soon realized that periodically running at maximum speed drained him after a while. Therefore, he had to change his approach, going at a significantly slower speed (which was still really fast, mind you) and using greater force.

After backtracking from something like the eighth dead end, he finally ran into a potential ally. At the end of the hallway in front of him, five guards were cornering a chubby boy with brown hair. Said boy was putting up some kind of energy shield to defend himself against the guards, but one of those guards had been using some kind of pulse gun to try and break the shield, and Dustin could see that the gun had caused a lot of damage already. Deciding to be the knight in shiny armor rescuing the... peasant in distress, Dustin quickly dashed in and knocked the guards out. Upon realizing what had just happened, the other kid released the energy shield, and Dustin recognized a familiar face.

“Wait, aren’t you the kid that boosts our powers when they want to run tests on us?” asked Dustin curiously, looking at the boy. He was a little below average in height. On his left wrist was the tattooed number **024** .

“What? Oh, yeah, right,” replied the boy sheepishly, “and you’re the one on steroids right?”

“Hey! It’s called ‘Enhanced Conditions’, asshole!” huffed Dustin exasperatedly, glaring at the kid. “Super strength, super speed, and other shit”.

“Right, sorry,” chuckled the boy, “I’m Ben, by the way”.

“Nice to officially meet you, Ben. I’m Dustin,” greeted Dustin warmly. Then, as if both boys came to an unspoken agreement, they walked together in the direction Dustin was heading. “So what are your powers exactly? You can make energy shields as well? I always thought the powers we have have to be of the same category or some sort”.

“Oh, yeah, they do. At least I haven’t seen any exceptions yet,” said Ben bashfully. “They called my ability ‘Power Manipulation’. Basically, I can sense powers nearby, and amplify or negate them. And as an extra, I can copy the powers of someone I touch. That energy shield back then was from a kid they ran tests on earlier today”.

“Okay, then,” chuckled Dustin. “Do you think you’d want to copy mine as well? We could move a lot faster with my speed, so running into dead ends won’t take as much time”.

“Oh, yeah, totally,” laughed Ben, “and I think we can avoid running into dead ends”.

“Why? Do you know the way out of here?”

“No, but if I remember correctly, I can enhance your sense with my power. Maybe you can somehow locate the exit?”

“Oh, right,” grinned Dustin, “let’s do that”.

Ben touched his arm, and suddenly Dustin felt like a power wave had just washed over him. He could hear distant noises from all around him, and smell the scents he hadn’t noticed (not all of them were pleasant). He noticed, on the left hallway at the end of the corridor, the faint smell of dirt behind metal. There was a distinct dirt scent somewhere behind him as well, but that path was significantly further away (how he knew that, he had no idea), and they would run into more guards.

“Okay, I think I know where to go. Left at the end of the corridor, go straight at the next junction, then turn left again. We probably won’t

run into any guards,” informed Dustin. “Are you ready to run?”

“Let’s go!” replied Ben with a smile, and they both started running.

Upon reaching the door, Dustin quickly “opened” it with a full force punch at max speed, and the door flew open (it literally flew away). They then proceeded to run towards the direction in which Dustin smelled vehicle exhaust, because that surely meant people.

So, about 10 minutes later, Dustin was running in the woods at somewhere around 50mph with Ben, in lab scrubs, while it was around freezing temperature. Not that he couldn’t run faster, but he needed to save his energy in case the town ahead wouldn’t be the last destination for the night.

“Damn, your power is so cool!” exclaimed Dustin. They had been talking about random topics to distract themselves from the chilly trip. “So aren’t you supposed to be, like super powerful or something? I bet those scientists made you use your amplifying power on every kid in the lab already. Why didn’t you just use some other powers on the guards?”

“It doesn’t work like that,” laughed Ben, shaking his head. “I can only copy one ability at a time. If I choose to copy another ability, the first one will be replaced. Plus, the borrowed powers feel wrong when I use them. Like using your non-dominant hand. It always comes out less powerful than from whoever I copied from. The kid I got the shield from would’ve been able to beat those guards. Also, the stronger the ability is, the more difficult for me to use. Not to mention, up until now I didn’t have a chance to talk to any of you guys, and each power has a different trigger. Some people can only do stuff when they’re angry, others when they’re happy. It’s very frustrating using other’s powers like that”.

“Wow, when you put it like that, it does sound frustrating,” said Dustin. They finally reached the town, and Dustin realized they should change their clothes, and maybe stock up on food. “New

question, what is your opinion on breaking into shops and stealing clothes?”

After they had changed into new clothes (locks aren't exactly made to endure superhuman strength), they started thinking about a place to stay and lay low. They obviously couldn't stay inside the store they had broken into, and the idea of stealing money didn't sit well with either of them. Not to mention the fact that two 13-year-olds going to a motel alone would raise quite a few questions. After checking the calendar inside the store, Dustin came up with an idea.

“Hey, it's the day after Christmas!” exclaimed Dustin.

“So?” inquired Ben.

“So, school's out,” explained Dustin, “and we can hide in a school gym or something”.

“Surprisingly, going to school sounds like a good idea,” Ben replied in astonishment.

So, they sneaked around the town, found the local high school, broke in and hid in the school gym. Dustin's last thought before he succumbed to sleep was how, 24 hours ago, he never would have thought he would breathe free air again.

#056

Max would've never thought wisecracking was something she'd do in this lab.

After breaking out of her cell (technically she had been let out but

who cares), she had almost immediately run into another kid. At first, Max had instantly switched to her battle mode, summoning a ball of fire on her left hand and a fiery bat on her right. But upon realizing who she had run into, she had quickly extinguished her weapons. The boy she had encountered, thankfully, had been sort of an acquaintance to her. In this lab, perhaps once or twice per month, they ran tests on the kids by putting two of them inside a domed battlefield, making them fight against each other, and collecting data on the match. Refusing to cooperate always led to suffering, so they had to battle. Max had always suspected they planned to weaponize her and the others somehow, although she couldn't think of a situation where she, or any of the captured, would not turn on the bad men the first chance they got. The black kid in front of her had been her "opponent" for the last two matches, the final match being three days ago. He was slightly taller than her, had short black hair, and could control the earth (or at least throw big chunks of rock towards her direction). **015** , as the scientists had called him.

"Well, well, well. I'm starting to think you're stalking me," said Max playfully.

"Hello to you too, Girl On Fire," chuckled the boy, "have any plans for tonight?"

"Actually, yes. I'm getting the hell out of here".

"Sounds great! Mind if I tag along?"

"Sure, stalker. Just try not to slow me down, okay?" said Max before heading towards a random hallway.

"I'll try," said the boy after catching up with Max. "I'm Lucas, by the way. Nice to not try to hurt you".

"I think I prefer 'stalker'," replied Max after pretending to think for a moment. "I'm Max, and likewise".

A few minutes later, they ran into the aftermath of an encounter

between half a dozen guards and probably another kid, and it was far from being pleasant. Max instinctively grabbed onto Lucas' arm upon seeing the bodies. The corridor they had opted for was splattered in red. It looked like the guards had decided to take their guns out and shoot themselves. The whole scene made her stomach churn, and she was fairly sure this would haunt her for a while. There was a bloody footprint walking away from the scene, turning right at the end of the hallway. Without saying a word to one another, they both went left.

The next encounter was, thankfully, a lot more pleasant, and a bit impressive as well. They ran into five guards trying to subdue another black kid. Said kid was proving to be very sufficient in his ability-integrated combat skill. One moment he was punching one guard, and the next it looked like he had been sucked into a spot somewhere in the center of his torso. He disappeared with an audible *pop* , then expanded from another point behind another guard, kicking him. *This guy is a teleporter* , thought Max while watching the kid jumping from one place to another, punching and kicking the guards without getting hit once. She and Lucas were both so hypnotized by the fight, neither of them had noticed a sixth guard approaching them from behind.

"Look out!" yelled the kid, before disappearing and popping up behind them, kicking the guard in the back.

That had woken Max from her little trance. The next moment, she summoned her fiery bat and started attacking the guards alongside the teleporter. Getting hit by her bat felt like getting hit by a scalding baseball bat, and the flame would catch onto whatever was hit, so it was not a bad weapon, and surely was preferred to throwing fireballs or being a human flamethrower when fighting in confined space. Max and the teleporting kid quickly knocked out the guards, while Lucas was trying his best not to get in the way of the fight. Lucas was strong, but he couldn't conjure up earth out of thin air like she did with fire (she had to combust the air in the shape of a bat, and somehow solidify the flame), so he wouldn't be of much help in this match. After the fight, she went and extinguished the fire created by her bat.

“Wow, you guys were amazing,” exclaimed Lucas.

“Thanks,” replied the other boy with a big grin. He then offered his hand, “I’m Mike”.

“Hi Mike, I’m Max,” returned Max enthusiastically, “and don’t let this guy fool you. If this had happened on the field, Lucas here would’ve buried all of these guards before they could even get close”.

“I don’t doubt it,” laughed Mike warmly, patting Lucas on the back while he was stuttering for a reply, clearly embarrassed by the comment. “So, do any of you know the way out of this place?”

“Not really,” replied Max. “We were just running around hoping—”

“Wait,” interrupted Lucas.

“What’s wrong?” asked Mike.

“I think I can sense traces of dirt around that corridor,” said Lucas, pointing at the path on the right, at the end of their hallway.

“What does that mean?” asked Max curiously.

“Well, it’s like when you walk into your house from your garden, you bring dirt from the garden back to your house on your shoes. The dirt mostly falls off near the door. I’m sensing that kind of dirt in that direction, so—”

“—so there should be an exit that way!” exclaimed Mike. “Let’s go!”

Upon reaching the exit, they realized they had no idea how to open the door.

“I can’t control big rocks with this door in the way,” said Lucas frustratedly. “Can’t throw something big enough on it to damage it. What about you, Mike? Can you teleport us outside?”

“My power doesn’t work like that,” replied Mike sadly. “I have to know where I’m heading, as in I must have seen the place before.

And I have a maximum range as well. Can't risk jumping to Altantia in case we turn out to be in Elysia. We might get stuck somewhere bad."

"I might be able to do something," said Max after considering the door for a while. "But you guys might want to stand back".

As the boys took a step back, Max closed her eyes and started raising her right hand towards the door. She started thinking about happy thoughts. She thought about the bright sun, taking a walk by the beach on a summer day, and hot chocolate on a rainy day. A warm feeling started to fill her veins, and she focused on channeling that warmth into the cold door in front of her. Even when her eyes were closed, she could still feel the heat, or the lack of heat, around her. She could feel the two warm red silhouette behind her that were the boys, as well as the cold blue door in front of her. Right now, she was focusing on the door, trying to make its aura brighter and brighter. The door started to radiate so much heat, the boys had to take a few extra steps back cautiously. Then it started to glow brightly, and finally, started to melt.

"Max, you can stop now," said Mike. "I can see the outside. I can get us out". The door had only melted a little, but a small gap was enough to have a look at the outer world.

Max stopped and almost tumbled backward, but managed to catch herself. Lucas and Mike both came to her side. "Wow, that was intense. I've never melted anything that big without help before".

"Well, you did a good job," said Mike. "Now do you think you need time to rest up? Because I have to warn you, your first time teleporting isn't gonna be pleasant".

Max gave herself a few luxurious minutes to rest, then urged Mike to get them out lest some guards find them first. And as Mike made the first jump, she realized that "not going to be pleasant" had been a huge understatement. Her prior observation about Mike being sucked into a spot wasn't that far from the truth. She felt like she was being forced through a very tight rubber tube. Everything went black and she was pressed very hard in every direction. Max couldn't breathe because of some invisible iron bands tightening around her chest, her

eyeballs were being forced back into her head, and her eardrums were being pushed deeper into her skull. And as suddenly as the feeling had appeared, it was gone in an instant, and fresh air filled her lungs as she took a quick gasp. Her knees gave way, and for the second time that day, Max was trying not to throw up. On Mike's other side, Lucas had also collapsed.

"Are you guys okay?" Mike asked worriedly. "We could run on foot if you want".

Under normal circumstances (or almost any non-life-threatening circumstances), Max would've chosen any other method of transportation. But she knew they weren't given much of a head start, and they would need to go as fast as they can, so the only logical choice would be to keep teleporting.

"We'll be fine. Don't worry," Max reassured Mike. "But they are going to start pursuing us soon. We should head towards a town or somewhere we can hide and find supplies. I can keep us warm in this weather".

"There should be a town that way," pointed Lucas towards a direction to their right. "The ground over there feels more polluted," he explained.

"Okay, then," said Mike worriedly. "Hold on, there's still a long way to go".

Upon reaching the town, called Hawkins as they noted, it was easy for them to get food and some new clothes, with Mike's convenient ability. A shelter, however, was a bit more difficult to find. They considered teleporting to a balcony of an empty room in a motel, or an empty house, but the chance of being spotted was too high, and they couldn't risk being engaged in any kind of struggles. Finally, Lucas came up with an idea.

"Do we have to stay indoors? Can't we just stay in the forest but close enough to the vicinity of the city?" asked Lucas.

“I guess the weather isn’t a problem for us, but that still risks us being hunted by the people in the lab,” said Max.

“I can help with that,” replied Lucas with a grin. “Besides throwing rocks, I can also make tunnels and secret hideouts underground and stuff like that. I can make one for us to hide, and cover the entrance with a stone or something. I can even set up some kind of traps so that, if someone steps on the ground near the entrance, we’ll be alarmed”.

“That’s brilliant!” exclaimed Mike. “Then we just need to find a place in this town that’s close to the forest, so we can flee to town if necessary”.

Mike left Max and Lucas at the grocery store to go scouting for a place for several minutes. Then he returned and teleported them to a clearing behind Hawkins High, claiming that it was the place in this town closest to the forest. Lucas began his magic, and soon after, they were all sound asleep in their temporary lair.

#036

They had to move sooner than Bill had expected.

About two months ago, Bill had broken out of the lab he had been kept in. There had been an attack on the facility. Luckily, with a harmless, unhelpful ability, he’d been kept in a very low-security cell. An explosion outside had created a hole in his wall, big enough for a 13-year-old to crawl through. Once he had gotten out, his *Tracking Evasion* had been of great use in the mountainous terrain of the region where the lab had been.

After about a week of running and hiding, Bill had run into three

boys - the people behind the attack that had set him free, hiding in a cave nearby. Said attack had drained them, and they had been recovering since. At first, they had been wary of him, afraid that he might be a spy. But gradually, they had become more friendly, especially since his ability had helped hide the four of them from the bad guys on two occasions since their encounter.

Eventually, they had allowed Bill to join their group and started telling him some of the things they had learned about the people behind the labs, and about people like him. He had learned that most of the time, if someone had powers, then at least one of their parents would also have had powers. He had also learned that the people hunting them were from a small division of a much larger organization, and that division was in charge of experimenting on children. There were other divisions in charge of running tests on grown-ups, creating technologies to counter their abilities, or training soldiers to fight them. So far, they had only been able to get the location of the labs within the “children division”. Bill and the boys had been scouting the location of one of these labs for about a week, planning for an attack.

Bill had learned a lot about the boys’ characters, but they had been very adamant about keeping their identities a secret (despite him introducing himself almost immediately after they had met). At first, they had decided to use code names (more like nicknames) because they hadn’t trusted him, but now they simply said it would be safer in case Bill somehow got captured and interrogated by someone who could read minds. The boys said they might’ve been distant relatives, but they considered themselves best friends to keep things simple. *Sparky* , who had gotten the nickname by always zapping others using static discharge when they were kids, was 15 years old. Out of the 3, he was the calm one that carefully came up with a plan before doing anything. *Seaweed Brain* , who had more than often made childish jokes and asked silly questions that made Bill question his maturity, was 16 years old. Despite his juvenility, he was the one who usually came up with an (albeit crazy but) actually working plan when the previous plan had been thrown into chaos. And finally, *Death Breath* , whom Bill had made sure not to stand too close to in the morning, was 14 years old. He always had a snarky comeback to anything he found stupid (which was most things). Sparky could

control the air around him, and Seaweed Brain could control water. If they combined their powers, they could even create storms and hurricanes. That had been what had attacked Bill's lab two months ago. Death Breath, who had also just broken out of that very lab on the same day as Bill, could control the shadows. He could create tendrils from shadows, create shadow portals to another dimension, and spy on the people in the labs from their own shadows. When needed, he could also use those portals to transport them to another location. Death Breath was their entire espionage and transportation division.

So when they heard the explosion from their hideout in the forest, they sent Death Breath out to gather information. About 15 minutes later, he returned and informed them an experiment had gone wrong, and the prisoners had escaped. After a quick discussion, they all agreed to go look for any prisoners that were still struggling to get away. Each of the boys started grabbing their inventories, and Bill used his power to remove any trace of them ever being in the forest before they all headed towards the lab. They split into pairs for maximum coverage, and Bill went with Seaweed Brain.

After about an hour of searching, shadow tendrils started wrapping around their feet (well, not his feet because Death Breath couldn't find him, but Bill didn't cover Seaweed Brain's tracks), indicating the other pair had found someone. Upon meeting the others, Bill noted that they had found three boys: an unconscious one that looked like he had recently been buried under a pile of rocks, a small boy that was on the verge of freaking out over his motionless friend, and an even smaller boy with his back towards Bill, one of his hands placed on the unconscious boy's head while the other his abdomen.

"I think I've healed all the broken bones and the internal damages, but he still needs to rest after what he's done," said the boy whose face Bill hadn't seen yet, and Bill recognized the voice immediately

"E-Eddie!" cried out Bill.

Eddie immediately turned around. "Bill! What are you doing here?"

“I w-w-was with these g-guys,” gestured Bill to his three companions. “We were p-p-planning to attack that lab”.

Eddie darted his eyes around. Bill had a feeling he knew *who* Eddie was looking for. “What about—”

“Now isn’t the t-time,” interrupted Bill. He then turned to Death Breath. “Do you th-th-think you can move u-us back to the town? And m-m-maybe you could find some clothes for th-them as well?” he asked.

Death Breath frowned, obviously had noticed the sudden topic change. “Okay then,” he finally said, “everybody grabs someone’s hand. It’s going to get creepy”.

Everyone quickly formed a human chain, and the shadow rose and swallowed them all. Bill had traveled via this method before, so he knew what to expect. Immediately, he was surrounded by total darkness, had a slightly cold feeling, and felt a floating sensation. He couldn’t see anything, but he could still feel his hands grabbing Eddie’s and Sparky’s hands, and he could also feel himself being gently pulled by an invisible force. There were whispers all around him, but they were too many and too faint to hear. If Bill had to explain how he felt, he would describe it as if he was submerged in liquid darkness. He had always wondered how Death Breath could make out any kind of information in this state. After about 2 minutes, he felt the darkness pushing him to the surface, and they all emerged from the shadow under their feet. Death Breath once again dived into his own shadow and disappeared.

“This is an old warehouse in a town nearby,” explained Sparky to the two new (conscious) members. “We set this up as a temporary lair when we were planning to attack the lab”.

“How did you find an abandoned warehouse in a foreign town?” asked the boy Bill didn’t know the name of.

“That wasn’t too difficult. Just look for old factories, harbors, or freight stations. They’re usually away from the town center. This place used to be where trains unload their shipments,” provided Sparky.

After a quick introduction to the place and to each other (Bill learned the other boy's name was also William), Death Breath returned with new clothes for the three additions, some toiletries, sleeping bags, and wristbands to hide their numbers (again, to keep their identities a secret to the bad guys). Eddie looked like he was about to collapse, but Bill knew he was waiting for the opportunity to ask Bill *that* question.

"Y-you should get to bed soon, Eddie. You m-must have drained yourself t-trying to heal the other boy," suggested Bill. "And if you ask th-those three boys, they'll t-tell you this," said Bill, attempting to make a joke, "*“ with great power, comes great need to take a nap ”*".

Eddie gave a small amusing huff before turning serious again. Once more, Bill interrupted before Eddie could say anything.

"W-we can talk t-t-tomorrow," reassured Bill.

Eddie looked like he wanted to argue but finally sighed in defeat. He grabbed a sleeping bag and head to the corner where they all had their sleeping bags together. "You know, Bill, it's very unusual for a stuttering guy to interrupt someone," joked Eddie.

Bill laughed at that. "Goodnight Eddie".

Notes for the Chapter:

Writing this fic, you constantly have to google for stuff you haven't thought about since you were a child. For instance, I had to google for actual scientific documents on how fast you need to go to run over water, and how strong is "a gentle shove at twice the speed of sound" lol.

First of all, in case you're wondering, yes, they're all in Hawkins whether the town name was mentioned or not. I'm not gonna send them to different places and then try to get them together somehow.

Next, I also wanted to show that, not all captured

kids are good and nice. Although none of the 13 main characters have killed anyone yet (not even from the explosion), there are still those who won't hesitate to kill, maybe even enjoy killing, and Stanley had released them all.

I also want to say, Sparky, Seaweed Brain, and Death Breath won't be around for long. Their purpose was to provide information to the kids, and maybe protect them at first (since neither Bill, Will, nor Eddie has any offensive/defensive abilities). They'll soon be gone when Mike wakes up. Therefore they're not on the character tags or fandom tags.

Now comes the part where I explain their ability choices:

- + Dustin - Enhanced Conditions: This one is based on Gaten's story about the scene when the bullies chased Dustin and Mike, he was asked to run faster to keep up with Finn, and he was like "I'm trying". Well, try no more.

- + Ben - Power Manipulation: Remember how Ben had no friends? With this power, he now knows pretty much everyone that's been tested by the scientists. Making friends gets easier. Plus, I feel like he's happy to help others.

- + Max - Pyrokinesis (Fire Manipulation): Based on how her character is both fierce as a wildfire and soft as a candle's. Also because I thought about Hulk & Thor scene in Thor: Ragnarok trailer.

- + Lucas - Geokinesis (Earth Manipulation): His slingshot skill. That's it.

- + Mike H - Teleportation: Because in the book, he had to run away from Henry's gang all the time (and he was good at it too), so I'm giving him the ability to move from place to place.

+ Bill - Tracking Evasion: I wanted Bill to be able to look after them in a different way than Mike. Plus, to be honest, if the team gets any more powerful, I'll have problems assembling the bad guys.

Now the only unmentioned one is Richie. Any guesses to what his ability might be? Although I believe I already gave that info away by commenting on someone's story ;)

Also, what was Eddie gonna ask? Any guesses?

3. What happened?

Summary for the Chapter:

A sudden jolt on his side disrupted Stan from his sleep.

[...]

Eddie's sleep didn't come easily.

[...]

Mike didn't think he had woken up at all.

Notes for the Chapter:

Hello people!

My chapters have become longer and longer every day. I blame my inability to estimate how many words that would take.

Anyway, enjoy!

[Updated on April 8th, '19]

#057

A sudden jolt on his side disrupted Stan from his sleep.

His first instinct was to smother whoever had made the sudden movement. After all, they had had a very long night. At first, they had been running through the forest, while being chased by the people from the lab. The girls had offered to help him carry Richie, but Stan had been very adamant about not needing help. There was no way he would pass over his best friend, who had disappeared for a year, to another person that easily. Plus, out of the three, he had been

the least useful in combat, so it would be better to leave the girls with more mobility.

When they had reached the road (and were a safe distance from their captors), they had managed to hitchhike a truck into the nearest town. Hitchhiking in their state wasn't the simplest option, with their outfits and the fact that they were four kids wandering in the woods - one being unconscious, but Beverly had managed to trick the nice truck driver into seeing her as someone older wearing more reasonable clothes, and distract him long enough for El to break them into the (luckily spacious) container. After reaching the town, they had broken into a clothing shop and grabbed some more appropriate clothes for the weather. Well, in Stan's opinion, technically they hadn't broken into the store. The store had already been broken into earlier that night, and they had just walked into a shop with open doors. Based on the two scrubs that were left in the changing room, which looked exactly like the ones they had been wearing, his group hadn't been the first *gifted* group to arrive at the town (or the shop). They had taken enough clothes for a few days as well as several backpacks, because Stan figured if everyone's destination was this town, the security would be strengthened by the end of the next day. Once everyone had packed up their stuff (Stan had packed one for Richie as well), they had headed to Stan's marvelous idea of a sleeping place: Hawkins' Grand Hotel.

The plan had been simple: Stan would hack into the hotel's system, change a free room's status to occupied, disable the cameras, and activate the fire alarm. Once the staff had announced it was an inconsiderate prank, at about 3am, they came into the hotel with the flow of people and gone to the room Stan had taken earlier - a royal suite with two double bedrooms.

Double bedroom. The thought jolted Stan awake. Stan was sharing the bed with Richie, who had just woken up, and who was probably freaking out at the moment.

"Hey, Richie, calm down," said Stan with his best soothing voice, "you're free now". He put a hand on Richie's shoulder, and Richie jerked away at the sudden touch. But upon seeing who it was, Richie's eyes stopped darting around.

“Stan? W-What happened? Where am I?” asked Richie confusingly. Then, as if he’d finally realized he was not in the lab anymore, he asked, “Is this a dream or something?”

“It’s alright. Calm down. You’re free,” repeated Stan. He didn’t want to say *safe*, but *free* was something he could promise at the moment. “We’re in a hotel. We found you outside of the lab yesterday, and carried you here”.

“Wait! You know about the lab?” asked Richie incredulously. “And your parents are here as well?”

“Well, not that ‘we’. Two other prisoners and I found you when we were breaking out”.

“Time out,” interrupted Richie once again. “You have powers too?”

“You know, it’ll be a lot easier explaining if you stop cutting me off,” chuckled Stan. At that, Richie started to calm down and nodded for Stan to continue.

“Yes, I have powers. I can control electronic devices. Last night’s explosion kind of damaged whatever they used to disable my powers, so I hacked into their system and released us all. I ran into some of the others, and we broke out of the lab. We found you outside, unconscious, so we took you along. And one of the girls we ran into, let’s say she’s very good at reading and persuading people, so we found a ride into the nearest town. Then I did a little hacking and now here we are, in a hotel suite. The others took the other room”.

Richie waited to see if Stan had finished before he started talking.

“Yeah, the explosion was our doing,” chuckled Richie. “Glad it helped everyone”.

“ *Our* doing?” asked Stan confusingly.

“Yeah?” replied Richie, mirroring the confusing look on Stan’s face. “Mike and me?”

“Mike?” asked Stan, before a memory popped into his mind. Richie had a twin brother named Mike. Richie’s parents had gotten divorced

when he was little, and his mother had gotten custody of his twin. For two weeks every summer, his twin would come visit him, and they would both go on a vacation somewhere for another two weeks, which was something the parents had agreed on. Stan used to hang out with both of them whenever the younger Tozier (well, Wheeler, since Richie's brother had adopted the last name of his stepfather) came to visit. "Mike, as in your brother?"

The question immediately set off Richie's panic.

"WHAT? You didn't find him? Oh fuck, what if he got captured? We need to get back there!"

"Richie, calm down," tried Stan. Richie had jumped off the bed and Stan had to grab him to keep Richie from getting too agitated. "Maybe he got away with another group. We found you shooting towards us in a bubble. Maybe he ricocheted towards another direction". Stan deliberately withheld the fact that Richie had been shot up from a collapsing building. That wouldn't help his current state. "We found traces of other groups arriving before us. We can try to track them down later".

It was obvious that Richie didn't want to sit around doing nothing, so Stan tried again.

"Look, even if Mike has been captured, it's better to track down the others and ask for their help before charging into the lab again. Please, if we still can't find him by tomorrow, I'll bring down that lab with you even if it's the last thing I do".

Richie was still hesitant, but he finally understood that they would need help if they wanted to attack the lab. "Okay then," relented Richie, "but I'm not leaving my brother in that fucking lab. I'll fight them even if I have to do it alone".

"You won't be alone, I promised," sighed Stan. Promises were very sacred to Richie and his brother. "Now, last night I got you some clothes, if you want to change out of that lab suit".

Richie looked down, finally realizing what he was wearing. Stan grabbed the backpack he got for Richie and tossed it towards him.

“I’ll give you some privacy,” said Stan before leaving the room.

Outside their room, the smell of breakfast filled the air. Beverly and El were sitting around the island. Bev was having a full English breakfast, while El was having waffles.

“Good morning,” greeted Beverly warmly, “Someone was being loud in there. Is your friend okay?”

“Yeah, about that,” started Stan, “my friend’s brother was in the lab too, and he was freaking out because they were together last night. So if you can, please don’t mention the collapsing building when he’s around. He’ll only be more upset if he knows”.

“Got it,” replied Beverly understandingly. El didn’t say anything, but based on the continuous silence they had shared in the container, Stan didn’t think she would say anything anyway.

“So, where did the breakfast come from?” asked Stan, changing the topic.

“Well, we got up an hour ago, so I decided to order room service. I wasn’t sure what you guys wanted for breakfast, so I got you French toast and scrambled eggs, and pancakes. The room service guy saw me as a very forgettable woman with nothing to gossip about”.

“Wow,” muttered Stan, before sitting down at the island and grabbing the French toast and scrambled eggs. “So are we even looking at the real you?” asked Stan jokingly.

“Good morning Staniel and my ladies!” interrupted Richie’s overly loud and cheerful Voice. “What’s a fine *place* like you doing in a *lady* like this?” winked Richie at Beverly, who only raised an amusing eyebrow back.

Wonderful , Stan thought, *how most of Richie’s traits showed up within five seconds of his entrance* . First, there was his booming voice that always immediately notified everyone in the room (and perhaps also the adjacent rooms) of his presence. Then, there were his Voices. He had a hobby of imitating different accents, although none of those

accents were any good, and whatever he was trying to do sounded more like “Richie with the flu”. His stupid nicknames, lame (and more than often crude) jokes, and flirtatious attitude also made an appearance. Although Stan could tell he was putting up a façade: his volume was a tad louder than usual, his joke was lamer than usual, and nobody’s mom had made an appearance.

“Indoor voice, Richard!” groaned Stan. Richie’s grin was more believable after that.

“The name’s Richie. Richie Tozier,” introduced Richie to the girls, making a show of tipping his hat, “nice to make your acquaintance”.

Beverly smiled at Richie, and his expression changed to *extremely impressed* .

“Wow!” exclaimed Richie. “That’s so cool! So, like, can you read my mind and all?”

“Well, I can,” replied Beverly verbally. “But I have better things to do than reading your undoubtedly chaotic mind”.

“Ow! Mah hart! Beverly, you wounded me!” whined Richie dramatically, grabbing his chest. Throughout the whole conversation, El looked like she was planning 12 different ways to murder Richie, so Stan decided to interrupt before she closed his mouth by force.

“Breakfast! Now!” commanded Stan, pulling Richie to the seat next to him, in front of the pancakes.

“Aww Stan The Man, you don’t have to take me out for me to—”

“Beep beep Richie!”

That effectively shut him up. Richie started devouring his food while Stan relished in the silence before Richie would inevitably start talking again. Sure, he was glad his friend was gradually getting back to normal, but normal Richie usually gave him a migraine.

The conversation started again when Richie was almost finished with his breakfast.

“So, Richie, what’s your power?” asked Bev. “I mean, you know about mine, and probably Stan’s as well. El here can move things with her mind. You flew towards us in an energy bubble yesterday, is that part of your power?”

Richie’s breath hitched, unnoticed by all but Stan. He quickly recomposed himself before answering.

“No, me lady. That be me brother Mike,” replied Richie using one of his Voices. “He can make force fields. But me lost him last night. Me trying to find him”.

Beverly’s expression clearly meant she didn’t expect to reach *that topic* this soon.

“Oh, I’m sorry...”

“Nah, it’s alright. I can do something else cooler,” deflected Richie. “Wanna see?”

Without waiting for an answer, Richie started shimmering. Suddenly he looked like an out of focus image in which you could only make out the general shape of the object. And as abruptly as it happened, Richie — or at least the blob that used to be Richie — was suddenly in focus again. Where Richie had sat, a replica of Stan resided, with even the same outfit.

“Holy shit, you’re a shapeshifter!” exclaimed Beverly.

Even El was amazed at Stan-Richie, enough to use her voice for the first time in his presence. “Exactly the same,” whispered El.

Stan-Richie turned to Stan as if considering something, before he spoke in Stan’s voice.

“Nah, I’m still the better looking one. Plus, I’m pretty sure I still have the bigger d—”

That woke Stan from his trance. His hand quickly covered Stan-Richie’s mouth.

“There’s no way I’m letting you say that in my voice,” glared Stan.

He, however, was not quick enough in realizing the gleam in Stan-Richie's eyes.

"No! Rich— Ew!" recoiled Stan as Richie licked his palm triumphantly. He quickly wiped his hand on Richie's shirt in disgust.

"So, how does it feel to get licked by yourself?" asked Richie, still in Stan's form.

"Fuck you, Richie!"

"Why, Stanathan," gasped Richie, turning back to his form, "I didn't know you have—"

"Shut! The fuck! Up!"

That afternoon, when the get-to-know-you questions had been asked, and the transformation game had been played (Richie could turn into animals as well, but the more different their sizes are, the more difficult), Stan and Richie volunteered to go out to gather information. Or what was Richie's lengthy description: escorting Stan to the police station and wait for him to hack the computers. There had been several reports on store break-ins, and on finding scrubs at or near the scene, so it was safe to assume that there were a lot of gifted individuals in town, and that the people from the lab would get here very soon, if they hadn't already.

Upon conveying the news to the whole group, they had all agreed to leave the hotel that night. The main issue was to find the next place to stay. Their group had fallen silent after not being able to think of a solution. The silence had lasted for fifteen whole minutes before someone finally broke it.

"Oh my god! Richie, please stop it!" groaned Bev.

"Stop listening to my thoughts then," replied Richie, unamused.

"I wasn't listening to your thoughts," explained Bev tiredly. "It's like, I'm in a room full of whispers that I can ignore, and suddenly you

started screaming high-pitched. How can I not hear that?"

"Wait, so are you saying thoughts have volume too?"

"For fuck's sake, guys, really?" exclaimed Stan.

"What? I could never tell if my thoughts were louder when I tried to yell in my head".

"Please stop yelling in your head, Richie".

"I know your thoughts are deafening, and I'm not even a mind reader, Richie".

"Oh, okay, trash the Trashmouth, I get it."

Can you distract him for fifteen minutes for me? Bev's voice echoed in Stan's head. I really need to concentrate on something. Plus, El is planning her fourth way to keep his mouth shut, and it is a very intricate plan.

Stan sighed, before heading towards his bedroom. He had something he wanted to ask Richie about anyway.

"Richie, can you come with me for a sec?"

Richie looked at him questioningly but decided to follow him.

Once they were alone, Stan got to the point.

"What happened to you? I mean last year, on the day you disappeared".

One of the things Stan had learned over the years: when confronted with an uncomfortable topic, Richie's defense mechanism was to make crude jokes until the question was dropped. "Well, that night Mrs. Uris said the most—"

"Cut it out, Trashmouth!" deadpanned Stan. "You know I can see right through your façade".

Richie flinched at the outburst, but finally dropped the act.

“It was the first time my power manifested,” answered Richie, his voice barely above a whisper, his eyes casting down. “I was thinking about you. I’m not sure why. Maybe I wanted to ask you about the homework, or show you something I found, or just thought of a joke I’d tell you the day after. Then I felt myself changing. Suddenly I was taller, my hair felt different, and I was wearing your clothes. It only lasted several seconds before I changed back into myself, but he was there”. Richie gritted his teeth at the memory, his expression a mixture of hurt and anger. “Wentworth was fucking there. He saw what happened. He beat me up and locked me in my fucking room. I think he called someone. I don’t even know how he knew who to call, but around 1am, those people from the fucking lab showed up and took me away”. Richie was now shaking with anger, his eyes blinking back tears. Stan immediately pulled Richie onto his lap, trying to soothe the hurt in his voice. “Wentworth sold his fucking son out, and the entire time I was struggling against those people, he never spared me a second glance”.

The story had ended, leaving Stan with a sobbing Richie and a strong desire to hurt Wentworth Tozier. Stan stroked Richie’s back soothingly until he had calmed down. When he finally stopped sobbing, there was a knock on the door, and Richie’s face immediately lost any sign of his crying, so fast, that Stan believed he must have transformed into a happy version of himself.

“I have two pieces of wonderful news,” announced Beverly from the other side. Stan opened the door and ushered her into the room.

“First, I contacted my friend, and he’s hiding in this town as well. He said his place is big enough for us to join him,” stated Beverly cheerfully. “And second,” cued the dramatic pause, “Richie’s brother is there”.

Eddie's sleep didn't come easily.

He knew being a fugitive wouldn't be easy. He knew more than often things would be way out of his comfort zone. But knowing things didn't make experiencing them any easier. All night, the voices in his head kept reminding him how unsanitary an abandoned building could be, who could've been sitting at his sleeping place, and what they could've done there.

He had also thought about the types of diseases he could've contracted by using the water from the pipes, despite having been assured multiple times by the water controlling guy that it was clean. When Eddie had finally stopped thinking about germs and diseases, his mind had wandered to the abundance of questions he had about the organization that was hunting them down. As much as he like would have liked to forget about the lab and the people working there, knowing the enemy was extremely necessary to avoid being captured again. Bill's friends had assured them they would get as much information as possible, once they had rested up. Funny how Eddie had been told to sleep before getting the information he wanted, but the craving for said information had kept him awake. Well, that, and Bill's evasiveness towards a certain topic. Based on the confused looks Bill had received when abruptly changing the topic earlier, his companions had no idea what Eddie had wanted to say. That had given Eddie some clues about where to head the conversation, so he had started planning questions to ask Bill later, as Bill had promised, and he had spent a good portion of his night sketching an outline for his upcoming confrontation.

Needless to say, when Eddie finally woke up, it was already noon. Someone (probably the shadow controlling guy) had apparently broken into a food factory and stolen enough sandwiches to feed a small army, and based on the amount of empty plastic sandwich containers, that had been their breakfast as well.

"Morning!" greeted one of Bill's friends when he noticed Eddie had woken up. This one had blond hair and electric blue eyes. Eddie still couldn't match their names to their faces, mostly because they weren't actual names, but rather ridiculous nicknames, so he had

been addressing them inside his head using their eye colors. *Green* was the water controlling guy, with his sea green eyes, and *Brown* was for the shadow guy with dark brown eyes. *Blue* was sitting at their working table with Will, while the others were nowhere to be found.

"I hope you don't have any allergies," continued Blue, "we have a wide range of sandwiches to choose from, but I'm never sure about their ingredients".

"I used to think I have, but I don't," replied Eddie nonchalantly. "Where are the others?"

"They headed out to search for other metas and to gather information," provided Blue.

"*Metas* ?" asked Will.

"Oh, yeah, that's what we call people with special abilities," answered Blue. "From *metahuman* . That's what the scientists called us in their reports. We don't really have publicity or official acknowledgment from the authorities to give us names or anything, so we named ourselves. Sounds less arrogant than 'supers', if you ask me".

Eddie grabbed a sandwich while listening to Blue and Will resume their previous conversation, which consisted of Will telling stories about his old life. Eddie learned that Will was a shy but sweet boy, with a loving mother and an older brother. Based on the frequent mentions, Eddie also figured that Mike was Will's best friend, and probably was the only friend Will had. Eddie knew that life too well, and he hoped they could be friends after this.

About half an hour later, everyone else returned with no extra members. Eddie waited for Bill to finish his lunch before giving him the look. Bill sighed but motioned for Eddie to follow him outside.

"What happened, Bill?" asked Eddie once they were out of earshot.

"You s-s-see, we were p-p-p-planning to at-t-t-tack that l-lab, s-s-so we

had b-b-been s-s-scouting the—”

“You know, I really hate to interrupt you, but that’s not what I asked and you know it,” sighed Eddie. “What happened to your family? One day you were there, and the next, it looked like you had moved away in the middle of the night without saying goodbye to anyone. And where is Georgie? I know you’d never leave the little guy willingly, so what happened?”

Eddie knew from the stuttering and the look on Bill’s face, that he was uncomfortable talking about this. Normally Eddie wouldn’t have pushed it, but he knew his best friend, and whatever Bill had been keeping to himself was hurting him, and Eddie wouldn’t just stand by and watch his friend being like that.

“I-it was the f-f-first time I s-saw Georgie’s p-p-power,” said Bill after a minute of silence. “I d-didn’t know we h-have p-powers then. G-Georgie can f-fix things. Like, i-if you br-break anyth-thing, he can r-recover it. I cr-cr-crashed my bike into our m-mailbox, and G-G-Georgie fixed it up. I f-f-freaked out, but Georgie w-was really excited b-because he ‘can do magic’. We w-w-went inside to t-t-tell our mom, but sh-sh-she freaked out for a-a-another reason. There were tr-tr-traf-f-fic cameras on the s-s-street, and she believed we h-had alarmed the b-b-bad people a-about our p-powers. Turned out our p-p-p-parents has p-p-powers too. Mom has su-su-super senses. She t-t-told me about my a-b-b-bility to avoid b-being tracked. B-By the t-time our dad got home, the bad p-p-people were already o-o-on their w-w-way to our p-p-p-place. Dad t-t-t-told us to r-r-run, leaving him b-b-behind to f-f-f-fend them o-o-o-off. He can f-f-f-fight with his p-powers, but I d-don’t know what th-that is. At about m-m-midnight, mom s-s-s-s-sensed that s-s-some p-p-people were a-a-a-after us, so sh-sh-she t-t-told me t-to r-r-run w-w-with G-G-Georgie w-w-while sh-sh-she l-l-lead th-th-th-them o-o-o-off our tr-tr-tr-tr-tr—”

Eddie hugged Bill, cutting off his stutter. Bill’s stutter always got worse whenever he was agitated, so the best Eddie could do was to calm Bill down. After a while, Bill’s breathing slowed down, so Eddie backed down, but still held on to the other boy’s hands.

“G-Georgie and I went to the next t-town and stayed there. I f-found out that when I held Georgie’s h-hand, I could kind of borrow his

power. I stole some money by b-b-breaking the vending machines to get the coins and then fixed it. We l-l-lasted for three months there, by breaking into em-em-empty houses to sleep, a-and using the money for food. But one morning, I let G-Georgie sleep while I w-went to get breakfast for him. When I g-g-got back, the place was s-s-swarmed with the bad people. They g-g-got me and G-G-Georgie, and I haven't s-s-seen him since”.

Bill's breathing started picking up again, and before he could say anything, Eddie interrupted with a hug.

“You can't blame yourself, Bill,” said Eddie softly. “You kept him safe for three months. You're going to find him again. I know you will”.

“I-I-I should've n-n-never l-l-left,” sobbed Bill. “I-I-I'm his b-b-b-big br-br-brother, and I c-c-c-couldn't even p-p-p-p-protect h-him. Only i-i-if—”

“Stop it, Bill!” chided Eddie. “You are the best brother anyone could ask for, and *when* we find Georgie, he will tell you the same thing. We will save your brother, but you need to stop blaming yourself for it”.

Eddie stood there and hugged Bill until he calmed down again.

“Thanks, Eddie,” said Bill when Eddie finally let go. “You're the best friend I could ask for”.

“Right back atcha, Big Bill,” chuckled Eddie. They sat together in silence for a moment before someone interrupted them.

“Hey, guys!” called Green. “Your friend is awake!”

Mike didn't think he had woken up at all.

Sure, after he had been caught, he had thought that *maybe* Richie had been as well, but getting a confirmation had given Mike mixed feelings. On one hand, Richie had been standing right in front of him - something he had never thought could happen again. On the other hand, being held captive and experimented on wasn't a fate he'd wish upon his worst enemy (okay that wasn't entirely true - he'd wish upon the people in the lab so they could get a taste of their own medicine), let alone his fucking twin brother. Not to mention, his brother had been missing for about eight months when he had been captured, so Richie would've gone through three times the amount of torture he'd been subjected to.

But that hadn't been the only eventful part of his day. Somehow he and Richie had managed to blow up the lab and set everyone free. They hadn't planned to do that, though. The lab usually had some kind of technology to contain their powers, so they didn't think it would be possible. They had felt so much power flowing through them that they had needed to let it out somehow. The breakout had been a surprise treat. Finally, just before being buried under a collapsed building, Mike had learned that his best friend had also been captured in the same lab that he and his brother had been in.

To sum it all up, in the span of a day, he had found out that his missing-and-presumed-dead brother was alive, that the two people that he was closest to had superpowers just like him, that said people had also been kept in the same place as him, he had broken also out of an impossible-to-break-out lab, and to top it all off, a building had fallen on him. Things had been so surreal, Mike had thought he must have been either dreaming or the main character of a weird sci-fi story.

Upon seeing Mike wake up, Will immediately came to his side and explained everything that had happened while the boy had been unconscious. Mike had almost panicked only once during the conversation, which was when Will told him that they couldn't find the boy Mike had sent away (whom Will then learned, was Richie). However, Will had reasoned that if the people from the lab had found him, they would've found Will and his friend Eddie digging Mike up as well, and Mike couldn't argue with that. Will had also told Mike

the others wanted to ask him about the explosion, but they would wait for him to have something to eat first. That had led him to where he was, at the lunch table, getting to know the others while munching on a sandwich.

“So, Mike, Will told us you had something to do with the explosion,” started Seaweed Brain after Mike had finished his lunch.

“Yeah, my brother and I did that”.

“How did you do it?” asked Eddie. “I thought the rooms there were made to contain our powers”.

“They were,” replied Mike. “I couldn’t extend my power outside the room when I was alone. But when I was with Richie, I kind of felt this wave of power washing over me”.

“W-were you able to use his p-power when you had physical contact?” asked Bill.

“Yes,” replied Mike, confused, “or at least I felt like I could. I saw Richie using my shield, so I probably could as well. How did you know that?”

“M-must be a si-sibling thing,” replied Bill. He made no attempt to elaborate.

“We think you guys could combine your powers into something stronger,” started Sparky. “That doesn’t always happen, but our theory is it happens to people who are somehow related to each other. For example, Seaweed Brain’s water controlling and my air controlling don’t seem to have anything in common, but when we use our powers together, we can create storms and hurricanes and tornadoes. We could even make it hail or create a thunderstorm, and neither of us can control ice or electricity. An interesting thing here is how you’re perfectly healthy after your little demonstration of power. After we combine our powers, we usually have to rest up for days before we can sit around and have a conversation like you’re having now. I guess it’s because we’re distant relatives so our powers don’t combine as easily as yours and your brother’s”.

“Well,” said Mike hesitantly, “when Richie and I held hands, something else happened as well. Like I said earlier, I felt like I could use his power, but when he used my shield, we didn’t have physical contact. Plus, I had this weird feeling that we were both thinking about the same things. Not like we both thought about a random thing, but more like I thought about one thing, he thought about another, yet somehow both thoughts appeared in both our heads. I also felt like I could see through his eyes”.

“Wow,” exclaimed Death Breath, “I already suspected you guys to be omega-level before you said that, but this is definitely omega-level stuff”.

“What’s *omega-level* ?” asked Will. Bill and Eddie didn’t seem to understand any more than Mike or Will either.

“Okay, this is a long one,” answered Sparky tiredly before clearing his throat, preparing himself for a long lecture.

“So, from what we’ve learned, people have had special abilities since forever. Those who claimed to have a photographic memory, sharp observation, or strong intuitions and all those things. Sometimes people with stronger powers show up too, but talking about medieval witch trials isn’t my hobby. Somehow, within the last 30 years, something’s changed and people like us have started to appear more often”.

“There’s this super-secret government organization that deals with people like us, called *Metahuman Experimentation Division* , or MED for short. The people from the lab worked for a sub-organization of MED, called MEDUSA. Stop laughing, Seaweed Brain. *MED’s Underaged Subjects and Assets* . They deal with children and teenagers like us. They have this classification of powers based on the Greek alphabet”.

“The lowest level is *delta* . The powers in this class are deemed ‘unimportant’ by the scientists. The examples I mentioned were all in this class. Billy boy here is probably in this class as well”.

“Next one is *gamma* . The ‘support’ abilities tend to be in this class. For example, Eddie is probably in this class”.

“Then we have the *beta-level* . People in this class can fight and defend themselves. Mike is probably in this one, along with me and Seaweed Brain”.

“The *alpha-level* are either stronger than the beta-levels, or can also spy on others with their abilities. Will and Death Breath should be in that class”.

“Finally, the *omega-levels* . They are a lot stronger than the alpha-levels, and MED hasn’t found an effective way to contain their powers yet. Unlucky for us, so far those omega-level abilities only show up when people combine their powers”.

“How did you learn about all that?” asked Mike, surprised about the details of the information.

“When Sparky and I broke out of our lab, we had grabbed *the most useless* folder,” provided Seaweed Brain exasperatedly. “The only good part in that folder was the document that mentioned the vague location of the labs. The lab you were in wasn’t even ‘Hawkins forest’. It only said ‘Hawkins’. We’d have to search through the town and forest everywhere in the vicinity to locate each lab”.

They spent the next couple of minutes going through the locations of the labs, as well as some information they had gathered. About 20 metas had escaped from Hawkins lab, and the guards still were not in the condition to start the hunt, so they would probably be safe for a day or two. Some of the metas had definitely made it to Hawkins, so they were not the only group in town. Sometime during the conversation, Mike noticed Will’s eyes were closed. At first, Mike had thought Will had dozed off, but then Will opened his eyes and interrupted the discussion.

“I’m talking to a friend of mine,” stated Will. “She and her friends are looking for a place to hide. Are you guys fine with them coming here?” asked Will nervously.

“Of course!” “Sure!” “No problem at all!” chimed in everybody.

Will closed his eyes again, but this time everyone else stayed silent and watched him. After about two minutes, Will returned to them, his eyes finding Mike's.

"Richie's there with her," announced Will, and a huge weight Mike didn't realize he had been carrying was lifted. "She said they'll be joining us tonight or tomorrow".

"Really?" asked Mike with a wide grin. *Was Richie okay? Was he hurt? Where are they?* He had so many other questions he wanted to ask, but he was sure Will couldn't answer them all. "Oh my— I can't— What— How—," Mike couldn't even form a full sentence to express his relief. Will put a hand on his shoulder, and that calmed him down a bit.

"So, what were you guys talking about?" asked Will.

"Oh, nothing too important. These guys will fill you in later. But now, I have something in mind," said Sparky, eyes darting to Bill. "If your friends are coming here as well, maybe we can split up. The boys and I can head to another lab, while you guys can rest up and... do whatever you want? I'm not sure if you want to fight them or just want to lay low".

"We'll fight!" replied Eddie a little too hastily. "I mean, we got out, but there are others like us being held somewhere. If Mike and his brother hadn't been there, we wouldn't have been able to escape yesterday. I think we should help them".

"Sure!" Mike chimed in. "We can look around the town for other metas first, then head in the opposite direction as you guys. But I don't think we can keep in touch with MEDUSA monitoring communication channels".

"Maybe we won't be able to keep in touch," said Will, "but I can keep track of them, and we can scratch out the places they've attacked".

"In that case, we should fill you in with some of the security procedures," said Death Breath. "As you can see, we use nicknames to address each other. You should do that as well. At least whenever you encounter the enemy. That'll make it harder for them to identify

you, and to use weapons that specifically counter your power. The nickname shouldn't be related to your number or your power".

"You also should always cover the numbers on your wrists," continued Seaweed Brain. "MEDUSA has a power index, and letting them see our numbers is the same as giving them our ID".

"And you should always go outside in groups of two to four people," provided Sparky. "Larger groups are easier to draw attention to, and going alone is too dangerous. However, if you're fighting, the more people you have, the more difficult for them to counter all of your abilities".

For the rest of the afternoon, they talked about things they needed to know when fighting MEDUSA. Before they split up, Death Breath had stolen enough sandwiches to feed a dozen people for two days. The three boys then disappeared into the shadows, leaving Mike, Will, Eddie, and Bill alone to plan their next course of action.

Notes for the Chapter:

Note to self: Never try to break the fourth wall again.

And yay, the nice man in a big truck made an appearance ;)

So, we finally got to Richie's power - Biomorphing: As some of you might have known from the book, adult Richie was dubbed "Man Of A Thousand Voices", and that made me think of "Man Of A Thousand Faces". That's it.

I've posted a photo of the [ability classification document](#), in case anyone wants to see.

I'm also going to address some of the mentioned powers in this chapter, but I'm not explaining their choices, since most of them were either pre-defined in another franchise, or just were there for the sake of this fic.

- The 3 "unnamed" boys: Aquakinesis (Water

Manipulation), Aerokinesis (Air Manipulation),
Umbrakinesis (Shadow Manipulation)

- The combined power of the 2 boys:
Atmokinesis (Weather Manipulation)
- Georgie Denbrough: Physical Restoration
- The (mentioned) power siblings have together
(Bill&Georgie and Mike&Richie): Power
Replication
- The (currently mentioned) power the twins
have together (Mike & Richie): Hive Mind

While writing this chapter, I literally had to google the names for people with superpowers, since there were so many and I don't know what to choose from. I ended up using the DC term.

Fun fact: Apparently, the PC term for that is "Differently Powered Individual", or DPI.

Finally, I'm going to bring in some familiar faces next chapter ;)

Until then.

4. Trouble

Summary for the Chapter:

Lucas had never felt stupider in his life.

[...]

Ben's power did not work on himself.

[...]

Bill was confident that he had finally made new friends.

Notes for the Chapter:

Hello people, and welcome to another chapter of Gifted!

In this chapter, I'm going to introduce some new characters ;)

Also I'm bringing in a lot of character bonding sessions. I just love the possible friendships between all the kids. You've previously had platonic Stozier, Kaspbrough, and Byeler. Get ready for more!

Also, happy skiing week for those who benefited from it (I love my week-long vacation), happy Lunar New Year for those who celebrated it, and happy belated Valentine's Day for those who still believe in that consumerist holiday!

Enjoy!

#015

Lucas had never felt stupider in his life.

It had felt so easy talking to Max in the lab, even sounding like he had been flirting when he hadn't meant to, while they had to run for their lives. So why couldn't he start a conversation now, when they were relatively safe in his element?

They had woken up about half an hour ago, and Mike had just gone to get them some food, leaving Max and Lucas alone.

"Did you have a good sleep?" tried Lucas.

"Uh... Not the softest mattress ever, but I'll live," replied Max offhandedly. "What about you?"

"Some rabbits kept hopping into my alarm zone," explained Lucas, "but after I changed the pressure threshold, it was a pretty relaxing sleep".

"It must be comfortable for you to sleep close to the ground," commented Max.

"Yeah, it is". And the conversation died.

What was he suppose to talk about next? The weather? They had been hiding in a lair, 10 ft underground, with small holes on the ceiling to try and get as much light in as possible (although it was barely enough to make out their faces). They could tell it was daytime based on the light from outside, and probably would be able to tell if it was raining, but that was about everything they would know about the weather. With Max heating up the place, the air was always flowing due to convection, thus they didn't have to worry about suffocating in their hideout. Lucas would've talked about the hideout (despite it obviously being another dead-end topic) if it hadn't felt like he was patting himself on the back with it.

"Hey, Stalker," said Max, interrupting his mental rant, "you don't have to tell me, but what was your life like before this?"

"Oh," chuckled Lucas at having something to talk about, "no, it's fine. I had a peaceful life. I lived with my parents and my little sister in New York". He then proceeded to tell Max about his old life, his old friends, and some stories about his family (since he hadn't been

terribly close to his friends and they'd only played video games whenever they'd hung out anyway). About five minutes later, Max was laughing at Lucas' story about mom and Erica during a typical weekend breakfast.

"So," said Max once she'd managed to stop laughing, "what got you into this situation? Again, I don't want to intrude—".

"It's okay," interrupted Lucas, smiling sadly, "I just never had anyone to tell this to before". Max gestured him to continue. "We had been on a vacation in Montauk. I was lying on the sand, while my family were playing in the water, when someone started yelling. A thief was running away with a woman's purse. I wasn't close to that thief, but somehow I felt like I could grab him from where I was lying, so I raised my arm and tried to grab him. The sand came up and grabbed his ankle, and he fell on his face. Nobody saw what I did — they were too focused on catching the thief — so I kept quiet. When the night came, I went to the beach alone and started to explore my power. It was the most liberating feeling I had ever felt. I could build sandcastles and sculptures and anything I imagined. I spent 2 hours at the beach before heading back to my family, who still hadn't had a clue what I could do. The next night, I returned to the beach to mess around some more, but this time I was ambushed. Those people made it look like I went for a swim and never returned, and I had never seen the light of day until yesterday. Well, technically today, through those holes I made," ended Lucas with a chuckle, trying to relieve the tension the story had brought.

"Sorry to hear that," replied Max sadly. "That's actually something we have in common. I was snatched at the beach too," continued Max with a light tone. "I lived in California, so I spent a lot of time at the beach instead of at home. Not that my parents were terrible or something. They loved me, but that was their only thing in common back then, so life at home weren't too comfortable. I learned that I could create fire one night when it got too dark. At first, it freaked me out because I thought my hand was burning, so I rushed to the water and soaked myself. But I finally realized it was my doing, and I wasn't being injured, so I started practicing making fireballs. One night, they just showed up and abducted me".

"Wow..." said Lucas. He had no idea how to reply to that. Max had

just told him a sad story, but in a tone that indicated she didn't want any sympathy.

"It's okay," replied Max. "My parents are probably divorced now, so I don't have anything to miss anymore. You, on the other hand, have something to miss. But I think you know we can't reach out to your old life because those people might be watching".

"Yeah, I know that," said Lucas sadly. "Doesn't make it any easier to think about though".

After that, they spent the rest of their wait in comfortable silence. About half a minute after, when Lucas' stomach made an embarrassing growl, a *pop* signaled Mike's return.

"Sorry, guys," started Mike, "the town has upped its security. I'm guessing we're not the only ones arriving here, since a lot of stores had police dropping by".

Mike then proceeded to unload his backpack of pre-made meals, and Max heated some of them up, so they ate in silence. However, when they were about to finish, a tingling feeling ran through Lucas' body.

"Someone's here," announced Lucas in a hushed voice. "Two people. Heavy. Probably adults," informed Lucas.

His two companions nodded and silently collected their stuff, prepared to teleport away if necessary. When they finished packing everything, footsteps started echoing through their hideout. Suddenly, Lucas dreaded that whoever was up there knew he was down here, that somehow they could make the whole chamber collapsed, burying him and his friends alive. Lucas didn't know how that could be possible, since he could move the earth, or Mike could just teleport them out, but somehow he believed that was what would happen. Oh his side, Max grabbed his arm, and based on the strength of her grip, he wasn't the only one who needed to calm down.

"Look what we have here," sounded a muffled voice above their heads. "Some lost rabbits trembling in their burrow". The sound of foot stomping echoed on top of them. "Come out now, or I'll break

your ceiling and get down there”.

The stomping continued, but this time in multiple places. That had to be their companion. They shook the hideout, and Lucas truly believed they would be able to break in soon.

“W-we should get up there,” said Max shakily. She sounded like she was trying to convince herself as much as trying convince them. “We have 3 people, while they only have 2. We can beat them if we have no other choice”.

Despite being in the dark, Lucas saw the uncertainty in each of their eyes, and he was sure his eyes reflected the same thing when they all nodded, and Mike teleported them up to their confronters.

They were 2 boys, around 17-18, standing 5 feet away from each other. They were about 5’10”, both had dirty blond mullets, and a *crazy* look in their eyes, but that was the end of their similarities. The more muscular one started talking, and Lucas immediately recognized the voice from earlier.

“Would you look at that! We have a teleporter here, Bowers”.

“Interesting,” replied Bowers, a manic glint crossed his eyes. “I’ll start with that one first”.

“W-what do you want?” yelled Max. She looked terrified but also determined to fight.

“Ooh, that girl’s feisty, don’t cha say?” exclaimed Bowers.

“Relax, sweetheart,” said the other guy, his voice sounded unnaturally sweet, like a predator tricking its prey into a trap, “we just want to stretch our muscles”.

At that, Bowers’ eyes flashed green, and a horrid scream came from Mike. He collapsed to the ground and jerked uncontrollably as if he was experiencing insufferable pain. Lucas believed he was. Immediately, both Lucas and Max were on the ground, trying to keep their friend calm.

“Stop that!” yelled Lucas, and a stone pillar shot up from the ground,

hitting Bowers on the stomach. He doubled over with pain, and whatever had been done to Mike was broken. He stopped convulsing and started panting instead of yelling.

“Why, you worthless piece of—“

“Enough!” interrupted the other guy from Bowers’ rage. His voice was raised, as if he was reminding Bowers who was in charge. “You had your shot. My turn”.

As the guy slowly approached them, Max and Lucas got Mike to his feet. He was still shaken up, so Lucas figured they had to fend the guy off until Mike was ready to get them away. But then the guy’s eyes flashed yellow, and everything disappeared.

Lucas was all alone, surrounded by darkness. He could still see himself, but that was about it. Darkness covered every and all directions. He was aware he was standing on a surface, but upon crouching down to touch it, he couldn’t tell what the floor was, whether it was cement, wood, or sand. Nothing made sense. He kept moving around without finding anything.

“Hello?” tried Lucas. “Max? Mike? Anyone?”

His voice was met with silence. There wasn’t even an echo of himself. But something happened when he started to run towards a random direction. Suddenly, as if the floor was a glass lid of a water tank, and said glass lid had disappeared, he fell into the water. He took a moment to take note of the new absurdity and went back to the surface, but his head hit something. The disappearing glass lid had reappeared, trapping him under.

Lucas was drowning.

Ben's power did not work on himself.

To be more specific, he couldn't enhance his own sensing ability.

It wasn't like Ben had a lot of opportunities to figure that out. Whatever technology they used to prevent the others from using their powers also blocked any traces of said powers, so he had only felt the other's powers when they had been kept together. He always thought he couldn't enhance the borrowed abilities because they weren't his to begin with.

The reason for that discovery was Ben's first time noticing his power's increased range. Last night, he had been trying to find the others before being cornered by the guards, which had proven to be a very daunting task. He had felt all those with powers within 200ft around him, but he hadn't been able to find a way to get to them without obtaining the ability to walk through walls. However, since he had run into the guards at first, and had moved with Dustin's power later on, the others had gotten out of his range before he could try to team up with any of them. However, that had changed when he had woken up, feeling 3 other power sources beside Dustin, somewhere in the wood behind the school, about half a mile from him. Based on the signals Ben's radar had interpreted, they had been sleeping, and two of them had been steadily using their powers in their sleep, probably to keep them safe and warm in that environment. He had thought about approaching them and offering to team up, but he didn't know how they would react when being approached in their sleep. Plus, he would need to discuss with Dustin before inviting anyone else to their team, although with Dustin's friendliness it wouldn't be a problem.

By the time Dustin had woken up, Ben had found the school kitchen and was currently raiding it.

"Oh, cool! You've found some food!" exclaimed Dustin cheerfully upon seeing Ben.

"Don't be so excited," chuckled Ben, "I only found instant mashed potatoes and frozen sausages. There's some chocolate pudding as well, but I don't think we can survive with that".

“Are you kidding me? Chocolate pudding is the best! I can have that for every meal”.

“No you can’t,” snorted Ben amusingly.

“No, I can’t. But you know what I meant,” huffed Dustin. “I’m gonna have one right now”.

Ben laughed but left Dustin be, and proceeded to whip up a proper meal — or as proper as a 2.15pm meal (based on the kitchen clock) could be with his current ingredients — for both of them. While going through the instruction for the mashed potatoes, something caught Ben’s attention. The signals from those he had been keeping track of had slightly shifted, which his mind had interpreted as them waking up. He contemplated talking to Dustin about their potential new allies, but ultimately decided that “I was kind of watching some people sleeping nearby” should be a topic for after they’ve had lunch.

Ben and Dustin’s lunch were uneventful. They talked about trivial things like what they used to do on their free time. Turned out, Dustin and Ben both liked to go to the library — something most kids their age would consider as a punishment. However, while Ben usually spent his time in history or poetry books, Dustin had a passion for science and science fiction, which led to their current conversation about how without Enhanced Durability, Dustin’s every bone would break whenever he punched something with his Enhanced Strength. Apparently, some science fiction books dubbed it *Required Secondary Powers*. Ben found it nice to have someone with some kind of hypothesis of how their abilities works. During their conversation, Ben was also keeping track of the powered individuals nearby. A member of the group he had been watching had suddenly disappeared and reappeared at a spot 300ft away from their old location, and kept repeating that process until they got out of his range. Ben figured that was the teleporting guy, since there weren’t many he had encountered with that kind of ability. About a mile away in the wood, another pair was also approaching the camping site of the aforementioned group. Maybe he could wait until they were closer to each other before going there. That would be more convenient to everyone. But first, he needed to talk about it with Dustin.

By the time they finished eating, the teleporting kid had returned to his friends, and the other pair had also gotten close to the camping site. Ben figured the timing was perfect to have this chat.

“Hey, Dustin,” started Ben, “so, there’s a group of people like us nearby that—”

“What? Where?” interrupted Dustin excitedly. “How did you know?”

“Funny you should ask,” chuckled Ben timidly, “I’ve been watching them since I woke up and—”

“Wait, WHAT? What do you mean you’ve been watching?”

“My ability has something to do with other’s powers,” explained Ben, “so I can sort of sense those with powers nearby. Each of us emits a distinct signal, like a beacon, and I can feel the signal if they’re close enough”.

“Okay, so why am I just hearing about it now?”

“Well, at first they were sleeping, and then the teleporting kid went somewhere and just got back 15 minutes ago, so I don’t think approaching them any sooner is a good idea”.

“How can you tell they were sleeping? And what teleporting kid?”

“Their signals were weird, just like yours when you were sleeping, so I took a wild guess. There are 3 of them, and I’m guessing one is the teleporting guy I once met at a lab. I haven’t run into many people who can suddenly disappear and reappear at a different location”.

“Well, what are we waiting for?” exclaimed Dustin eagerly. “Let’s go and meet them!”

“That’s what I was gonna suggest before you—”

Suddenly Ben felt it, the sudden change in the signals. The unknown pair had reached the trio, and the trio’s powers were now raw and wild. The teleporting kid was jumping around aimlessly, while the other two were exerting their powers on their surroundings. One of the pair were using their powers on the other 3. Ben immediately

understood.

“We have to go, now!” said Ben, a shocked expression on his face. “They’re under attack”.

“Wha—”

“NOW!” yelled Ben. “Follow me!”

Ben started dashing out of the school and towards the signals, without waiting for Dustin to follow. Dustin could run faster than him anyway. About 300ft from the signals, he started to feel the effect of the power outburst. The ground started shaking and moving. Chunks of ground (*Ground? Earth?* What were he supposed to call them?) in different sizes, some barely enough to stand on, others bigger than an average front yard, kept moving up and down like each of them were pumping something at a different speed. Dustin muttered a barely audible *What the fuck?* under his breath, before they both tried to move through the moving field. At least now Ben knew the identity of another member of the trio. He had only worked with one guy with Geokinesis. When they got to the woods, the ground were more stable. It was still shaking but the tree roots must have stopped the more intense movements. However, the air started to get hot and dry, and this time Ben had no idea whose powers had caused that. He didn’t have to guess, though, since the ground was more stable now, he and Dustin sped up and reached the center of all the commotions. On the ground, with their hands clutching their heads and their mouths wide open in a silent scream, were the geokinetic boy and the pyrokinetic girl (which explained the dry hot air). The teleporting boy kept jumping around like he was trying to get away from something Ben couldn’t see. In front of them were something like a collapsed room underground, and on the other side of the collapsed room, were the root of their problem. Two guys were eyeing him and Dustin like they were two new preys for them to enjoy. Two guys whose faces Ben could never forget. Two of the worst people he had to work with in the power testing room. Subject **#013** and subject **#014**. Fear Manipulation and Pain Inducement. That was why these guys’ powers were out of control. Fear.

“Looks like there are more toys for us,” exclaimed **014** — Pain Inducement — with a sadistic smile. “This time you’re not getting

out”.

Dustin hadn't had the time to react before **014**'s eyes glowed green, and the next moment, he was on the ground screaming. Ben immediately reached his power out to Dustin and the trio, nullifying the effect of whatever was used on all of them, and all the power outbursts stopped as Dustin stopped struggling.

“What the—”

The sentence was cut short as Ben dashed forward with his super speed and punched **014** in the abdomen, effectively knocked him down. Before **013** had the time to react, Ben knocked him over and pinned him to the ground with his super strength. Based on the look in **013**'s eyes, he was trying to use his powers on Ben, but Ben was currently suppressing the abilities of both **013** and **014**. Ben knew he wouldn't be able to keep using his own power along with Dustin's for too long now, but he still had enough strength to threaten the two enemies.

“Stay away from me and my friends, do you hear me?” gritted Ben through his teeth. Without waiting for an answer, Ben picked up both guys and threw them as hard as he could in the opposite direction of where the others were, not caring where and how they would land.

“How— How did you do it?” asked the pyrokinetic girl while Ben was walking back to them. She still had a frantic look in her eyes, obviously still afraid of whatever she was shown.

“Their powers don't work on me,” explained Ben slowly, “none of your powers do. I guess they didn't find me important enough to remember that when I was in the testing room with them. Hi, I'm Ben, and that's Dustin”.

“M-Max. And these are Lucas and Mike,” replied Max. The other boys nodded as their names were mentioned, but otherwise was still working on slowing their breathing.

“Fuck! What have you dipshits done?” came a stranger's voice from behind.

#036

Bill was confident that he had finally made new friends.

His 3 previous companions felt more like teammates to him. Sure, he could count on them to watch his back, and they trusted him with theirs, but the fact that they never disclosed their names to him hinted that they believed he wouldn't be with them for a very long time. Not to mention, they had already had their dynamics, and sometimes Bill had felt like an intruder. Mike and Will had also had their own history together, but they had been more open to new friendships. That was why, despite it being around 10pm and without electricity, Bill had offered to show Mike around, while Eddie and Will were having their own bonding session. They were currently staying in the main warehouse, which was as big as a football field, and a 25ft tall ceiling. The warehouse had a conveyor belt that divided the space into smaller areas, but they could all climb over the belt to get across the room. In the center of the warehouse were a long table and a whiteboard that Bill and the other 3 had carried over from the warehouse office. The warehouse office was located in the second building, accessible from the main warehouse via a door in the back. The first 2 floors of the second building consisted of more storage areas, each area significantly smaller than the main warehouse. The top 3 floors were saved for offices. The stairs were at both ends of the building. There was a cargo elevator at the far end of each floor, next to a bathroom that was still operational, though Eddie would probably have something to say about them. For the moment, Bill and Mike had decided to take the stairs to wander around, while talking about random topics ranging from how their powers work to childhood stories.

“— and mom got so mad, we both ended up losing our shotgun

privilege,” concluded Mike with a grin, ending his story about the time he and his twin *accidentally* sabotaged the family vacation photos by dyeing his older sister’s hair.

“That’s h-hilarious!” Bill bursted out laughing. “So for how long did Nancy’s h-hair stay blue?”

“Only for like a week,” replied Mike, “but we were never allowed to have ‘unsupervised shopping trips’ on vacations again”. From what Bill had gathered, Mike’s brother Richie were the one who usually came up with pranks, and Mike would be the one who, despite initially saying he wanted nothing to do with them, always contributed a more efficient way to execute whatever Richie had planned. Mike sometimes would say he couldn’t stand his twin brother, but from the way he told these stories, nobody would believe that.

“Bill?” started Mike, interrupting Bill’s thought. “You know, you can count on us. Will and I, I mean. We’ll help you if you want. I’m guessing your brother or sister is in trouble, right? I don’t mean to pry or anything, and I understand if you don’t want—”

“Mike,” interrupted Bill, “s’okay”. Bill had known Mike for less than 12 hours, yet he already had a feeling he could talk to Mike about anything. “You’re r-right. My younger brother was also c-captured, and I have no idea w-where he is right now. That’s why I targeted those labs. I’m g-going to find him”. Despite talking about an upsetting topic, Bill had barely stuttered. Maybe it was because he hadn’t gone into details like his conversation with Eddie, but Bill suspected it had something to do with Mike’s soothing effect on others. Somehow by talking to Mike, Bill felt like things could truly be fine, that he would find his brother again. It was also fitting how Mike’s ability was a shield, to give the others a safe haven in a heated battle. With all those quirks Bill had seen within 15 minutes around Mike, it wasn’t a surprise to see Will being head over heels for the boy (yes, Bill had noticed that look on Will’s face).

“I’m sorry to hear that,” said Mike solemnly. “I have a younger sister too. Her name is Holly. I guess she’s 4 now, but she was still 3 when I left my house”.

“W-what happened?”

“You know, the usual stuff,” replied Mike nonchalantly. “My powers manifested, and my mom told me to keep it a secret. My dad — well, stepdad — had no clue about all these powers, but my mom apparently did, and she had heard stories about what people would do to those like us. Rumor had it that some kid from the neighborhood did something ‘freaky’, and the next day his entire family disappeared, so I lay low. I even stopped contacting Will because I feared once they found out, he would be in trouble too,” said Mike with a sad tone in his voice. He paused for a bit before continued. “Anyway, that went on for several months before I accidentally used my power to shove someone out of harm’s way in public. After that, I panicked, so I ran away. I had money on me, so I bought a ticket to the next town. I called my mom once before I got on the bus to explain what I was doing. ‘If anyone asks where I am, I’ve left the country’. That was my great last word to her,” chuckled Mike sadly. “I lived on the street for a while before they finally caught me. The rest you already knew”.

Bill had noticed how less lively Mike had been, telling this story. Yet Mike had still chosen to share a very personal part of his life to Bill. “I-I’m sorry,” said Bill after a moment of silence, “you d-didn’t have to tell me that”.

“It’s okay,” smiled Mike, “you told me about your brother, after all”.

“But it’s n-not the same,” protested Bill.

“Nah, you trusted me with your past so I trust you with mine,” grinned Mike. “Now, do you have any fun stories about your brother?”

Bill chuckled and started to tell Mike about the time he made Georgie a paper boat. Just like that, the atmosphere was cleared between them.

"I'm telling you, the main reason why they hate each other is because of the competition," exclaimed Mike. Somehow they had started a debate on why werewolves and vampires strongly disliked each other. "Think about it. They're both nocturnal hunters, so they get on each other's territory a lot".

"Yeah, but th-that's not enough to form hatred," replied Bill. "I think e-each of them believe they're the superior s-species, and think of the other as pests".

"C'mon, that argument has no basis," disagreed Mike. "You can't just say—"

"Mike!" came a muffled voice from several floors below them. Bill and Mike dropped the conversation and gave each other questioning looks. "Mike! Bill! Where are you?" came the voice again, this time a little louder.

"Will," mumbled Mike in recognition. Bill had also noticed the panic in Will's voice. Without saying a word to one another, they both dashed towards the direction of the voice. "Will!" called out Mike. "We're here! On the 3rd floor!"

As Bill and Mike dashed through their 3rd door towards the stairs, Mike ran into Will literally, and they both tumbled to the ground. Eddie was right on Will's tail but had managed not to trip over the two.

"Mike! Put up a shield now!" demanded Will, still on top of Mike.

"What?" asked Mike confusingly. "What's going—"

"NOW!" yelled Will once again, and Mike did as he was told. He stretched both arms away from his body, and a spherical shield appeared around all of them.

Almost immediately after that, some kind of pulse washed through the building, shattering the glass and stirring up layers of dust, emitting a groan from Mike as it went over them.

"W-what was that?" asked Bill.

“I don’t fucking know,” exclaimed Eddie. “We were just talking when Will suddenly felt wrong or something and—”

“We’re under attack,” replied Will. He had just gotten off Mike, and was helping him up. “I felt the danger. They’re already here”.

“Shit, that hurt!” cried out Mike when he had finally got up. “Do you know how many are there?”

“Seventeen,” provided Bill. “No, eighteen”.

“How did you fucking know?” screeched Eddie.

“I can erase tracks, Eddie,” explained Bill, “I have to feel them to erase them. We have to hurry. They’re already in the warehouse”.

“We got your backpacks right here,” said Will, passing Mike a backpack while Eddie tossed Bill his own.

They started running away from where Will and Eddie had come from. Once every minute or so, Bill tried to detect the traces of those inside the building to pinpoint the location of their chasers. Bill’s trace removing ability wasn’t passive, so unlike other sensing abilities, he needed to consciously used his power to detect others’ traces. Occasionally, there was a rumble that shook the ground.

“What are they doing?” asked Will, to no one in particular. “Are they planning to kill us?”

“No, that’s their grenade,” provided Bill. “They were designed to knock people out in close range”. He then used his power again, since they were in a dark building at night, with all the dust in the air obstructing what little vision they had, someone could’ve been right in front of them and they wouldn’t have known. To Bill’s surprise, there were 3 new human traces coming into the building. “Shit! Three more have just arrived”.

Immediately after his announcement, a loud roar echoed through the hallway.

“What the fuck was that?” shrieked Eddie. Bill hadn’t heard about any of their equipments that could make such sound, but he wasn’t

thinking about that right now. Out of the four, he was the only one who knew the location of the enemy. If his friends ran ahead, he could circle back and create some kind of distractions to get the enemy off their tails. His friends would definitely not agree with this plan, but if he was sneaky enough (which he was), they wouldn't realize he was gone until later.

"Bill! Bill!" called Mike, snapping him away from his thought. "You know how to get out of here, right?"

"Yeah, why?" asked Bill in a daze. But as the question left his mouth, he realized exactly what was happening. They — Bill, Eddie, and Will — had just walked through the only metal door separating the front and the back end of the building, and from their recent tour, Mike was definitely aware of that. If something, let's say a strong energy-field attack, were to collapse the top floors to bury the door on the ground and make the upper floors' doors inaccessible, the back of the building would be completely cut off from the front. Bill hadn't been the only one that had planned to stay behind. "Mike, n—"

Mike slammed the door in his face, and used his energy bubble to break the handle on Bill's side.

"Mike!" called out Will. He and Bill proceeded to try to slam the door open, to no avail. Moments later, the sound of floor/ceiling falling down, accompanied by the shaking of the ground, confirmed Bill's prediction of Mike's plan.

"Son of a bitch!" cried out Bill, punching the metal door one last time. "C'mon, we can get outside and circle back in to find him".

Bill could feel Mike heading away from them on the other side of the door, but there were no human traces on his side of the building, so he didn't bother to use his powers again, but focused on getting the 3 of them out of the building as fast as possible. They hurriedly dashed through the rooms and towards the stairs at the far end of the building.

"Down here!" called Mike's voice once they had reached the stairs, and Bill breathed a sigh of relief. The selfless bastard had made it to their side — a lot faster than Bill had expected (to be honest, he

hadn't expected that at all). He ushered Will and Eddie down the stairs before heading down. Once they were outside the building, he wrapped Mike's shirt and slammed him to the wall, a little harder than he had planned to.

"Don't you ever pull that again," demanded Bill. He was trying to sound threatening, but in all honesty, he just sounded relieved. The look Mike gave him, however, was very confusing, and maybe because it was dark, but Bill felt something wrong about Mike that he couldn't pinpoint. That was, until Will spoke up.

"That's not Mike".

Notes for the Chapter:

Guess who has the tendency to throw himself into danger to help his friends!

Has anyone else been able to flirt when they hadn't meant to, but unable to do so when they wanted to? No? Just me? Okay then...

A nod to Stranger Things' initial name. Yay! And also to Seaweed Brain and his mom, if you know what I mean.

Back to my power almanac:

- Henry Bowers: Pain Inducement
- "Unknown mullet guy": Phobikinesis/Fear Manipulation (Yup, I definitely took that from Pennywise)

Dustin's ranting about random stuff is me trying to show off all the random things I've learned while researching for this fic.

Ben Hanscom saved the day, beating the bad guys with his Gamma-level ability! You can see that the scientists had created that scale to measure what they believed was important (which was using the metas to fight against other countries, and not other

metas) and that scale doesn't reflect the actual power of one.

My brain always gives me the weirdest questions at 2am. Some of them are:

- The difference between a griffin and a hippogriff (one with a lion's back and one with a horse's)
- The difference between War and Conquest in The 4 Horsemen of the Apocalypse (honestly I forgot it again)
- Which one is the greater number, Graham's number, or a Googolplexian (also forgot)
- And of course, the mentioned question about vampires and lycanthropes.

Has anyone realized how Bill wasn't stuttering when the attack started? Yeah, that was intentional.

Also, I'll probably won't dig into this, but did you think Mike's story was familiar?

And finally, I'm sorry if your favorite character didn't get enough "screen time". I don't have a self-discovering arc or a personal arc for each character, so some aren't gonna shine as often as others.

5. Regroup

Summary for the Chapter:

Turned out, flight was included in a lot of kinetic abilities.

[...]

Richie must've had the stupidest, most idiotic, altruistic, philanthropic pain in the ass for a brother.

[...]

Mike had never felt more helpless than he had been yesterday.

Notes for the Chapter:

New chapter is up! Yay!

Last chapter, things were a little hectic, I guess? So we'll see where things go after that little chaos.

Also, I kind of relaxed too hard on my break and literally did nothing, so this whole chapter was written pretty much around 2am every night this week. Sorry for any mistakes I might've made.

Enjoy!

#011

Turned out, flight was included in a lot of kinetic abilities.

Jane had figured that out earlier that afternoon, when Richie had barraged her with questions about her ability, one of which had been whether she could levitate herself or others. She had ignored the other questions, or at least, she hadn't replied to any of the questions

verbally. Jane had a habit of wallowing in old and unpleasant memories that often left her with a lot of unanswered questions and a sour mood. Therefore *sometimes* Richie could provide a nice distraction from her own mind, as long as he didn't give her a migraine while doing so. The other questions were about things she had already done — lifting something heavy, lifting multiple objects, stopping moving objects, affecting things she couldn't see, and so on. But since the scientists had never told her to precisely use her powers on anyone, she had also been curious to find out the answer. As expected, Jane could lift herself or others up using her power, but unlike levitating herself, she had had trouble balancing the others while they were in the air. The people at the lab had only been interested in the magnitude of her power, not the precision, so she had never paid attention to the rotation of her objects anyway. Hence, for the remaining of their time in the hotel, Jane had spent practicing levitating and propelling herself, and with the help of Richie's shapeshifting ability, levitating different animals of different sizes.

Which had led to this current setup, with Jane carrying Beverly behind her back, flying through the woods, at 3ft from the ground, and Stan holding onto Big Wolf Richie for dear life, as he sped across the forest floor. Before they had left the hotel, Stan had displayed the map of Hawkins on the huge TV in their lounge, highlighted the possible routes to get literally across town to the old train station's warehouse, and explained the pros and cons of each option. They had all chosen to get to the forest and circle around the town — the furthest route, but had no cameras, the least chance of running into people, and excellent coverage. They were surrounded by pines as tall as towers, with thick branches poking out hiding them from anything short of an infrared camera (according to Stan). Despite it being a bright clear night, most of the moonlight was blocked by the trees, and the little light that managed to pierce through the pine leaves could barely help them from colliding with the trunks. Or at least that was Jane's struggle. Richie's wolf vision seemed to have no problems with navigating through the dark forest, and Jane felt like he had been deliberately slowing down so she could keep up. Which was totally unfair, by the way, since Richie also didn't seem to have any problems with the chilly weather, and Stan had definitely benefited from the warmth from his death grip on Richie, while Jane

and Bev were susceptible to any slight winter breeze. She still wouldn't trade her place with Stan though, not in this bumpy path, or any other paths for that matter, if it required riding an animal. But one could always wish for better circumstances.

Hours later (or it could've been 30 minutes but, running in the woods, Jane didn't have any way to know, did she?), Richie suddenly stopped running and started growling. Stan also became cautious.

"They're close," warned Stan, "the people at the lab".

"I didn't know you speak wolf," joked Beverly quietly. "How could you tell?"

"I sense high tech equipments nearby," explained Stan. They brought something big".

"There are more than a dozen of them," supplied Richie after shifting back to his human form. "I can't tell exactly how many, though. I'm not used to using wolf senses".

"It's alright," assured Beverly. She then motioned them to be quiet and started moving towards the enemy. Upon approaching the edge of the forest, Jane could make out the old train station somewhere about 100ft away from their hiding place, the abandoned warehouse next to said station, two vans in front of the warehouse, and more than a dozen guards, probably armed, spreading out. *Not guards, soldiers*, thought Jane. These people seemed to be trained to capture them. Two of the soldiers had just finished assembling something heavy on a tripod. It had a tubular shape, with one end connecting to what seemed to be a control box with different buttons, and the other end attached to something similar to a satellite dish.

"Holy fuck!" exclaimed Stan quietly as he saw the device. It was apparent to Jane that Stan had some idea what that device would do, and she witnessed Stan's eyes changed their emotion 3 times in the span of a second. At first, Stan had looked like he was afraid of whatever the device could do, but then he had quickly changed it into a determined look. Immediately after that, his eyes had acquired

a glint of excitement, like he had come up with a bright idea, and now he looked like he was anticipating something. Jane contemplated asking, but ultimately decided to wait in silence.

“What the fuck was *that*?” Richie whisper-yelled. As Stan was about to reply, the two soldiers had pointed the device at the warehouse and pushed something on the control box. Suddenly there was a glass breaking sound as all the visible windows from Jane’s view shattered.

“*What* the fuck was that?” Richie whisper-yelled again at a higher tone.

“Some kind of high tech gun,” provided Stan. “It fires off some kind of pulse that can shatter glass and knock out people at close range. I just disabled it, though, and sabotaged the night visions glasses they have. Or at least the digital ones”.

“What if they find out we’re here?” inquired Beverly. But as she was speaking, the other soldiers started moving towards the warehouse, so Jane guessed they didn’t. However, they did leave the two operating the gun behind.

“I was hoping they weren’t smart enough for that,” grinned Stan. “Let’s go get them”.

Without waiting for the others, Jane silently approached the soldiers, and once she was in range, she used her powers to slam the soldiers into the nearest van, knocking them unconscious.

“Nice work, El!” exclaimed Richie. “Let’s join the party!”

“Wait,” interrupted Beverly, “I think I should stay here”. Jane, like any reasonable human being, sent her a questioning look. “I’m a mind reader. I can try to read their mind and find out what they know. I’ll be fine on my own, you guys go ahead”.

Richie gave her a curt nod before dashing towards the warehouse. Stan, however, reached down to the two unconscious soldiers and retrieved 2 pairs of goggles with thick temples. “Night visions,” provided Stan, giving one to Beverly and the other to Jane. “I can feel the equipments, view what they display, and I don’t think Richie

need one. Come find us when you're done".

A lion roar echoed from the warehouse, signaling Richie's encounter with the soldiers. Stan and Jane immediately rushed to the warehouse.

"Can you stop something as fast as a bullet?" asked Stan as they enter the extremely spacious storage facility.

"No," answered Jane, eyes scanning for their next location and landed on a door at the back of the warehouse. "Follow me".

Upon going through the second door, they were met with a staircase and another door leading to the 1st floor of wherever they were. The moonlight from the shattered windows illuminated the room enough to make out the surroundings, but Jane didn't think that would be the case for the inner rooms.

"Let's get to the 3rd floor," suggest Stan, "I think Richie would go up from the bottom".

The 3rd floor was a maze of hallways and rooms, most didn't have access to windows to the outside, so Jane and Stan moved in a line, with Stan in front of Jane, so she could see if he gave a signal. After a moment, they heard chatter in front of them and quickly ducked behind a corner.

"—nication with Sierra. Just get down there! Beware of hostiles. Over".

At that moment, the entire place was shook, and the sound of building collapsing could be heard from everywhere.

"Fuck! What's happening?"

Stan, having decided whatever had happened was from a friendly party, emerged from their hiding place raising one hand, and Jane felt something sent out shockwaves pushing Stan back. Following Stan's step, Jane found 3 unconscious soldiers on the ground.

"Their knock-out grenades," explained Stan. "They're high tech stuff I could detonate". He then bowed down and grabbed what looked like

a tablet from one of the unconscious guys.

“Tango, come in. Over,” came a voice on their radio.

“We should move now,” said Stan, grabbing the pairs of goggles from the soldiers and put one on. They passed through another door and Jane saw a figure with a raised hand at the corner of the hallway they had entered. She took a step forward, immediately collided with... something, and fell back with an *oof*.

The hallway they were in didn’t have a window, but the rooms on its side must’ve had, and the light from said windows faintly illuminated them enough to make out if someone had entered the hallway. Whoever that was must’ve figured it out to choose this hallway to put up a fight. *Smart move*, thought Jane.

“Mike? Is that you?” called out Stan. “I’m Stan. Richie’s friend. Remember?”

The figure —boy— dropped his hand, and Jane could feel whatever had been in the way was gone. He approached them slowly, and Jane could see that, this was definitely Richie’s twin. The quickest but most accurate description would be *a less chaotic Richie without the glasses*.

“Stan? What are you doing here?” asked Mike. “Are you with Richie? Where is he?”

“Slow down. Here, put this on,” responded Stan, giving Mike a pair of goggles. “Night visions. Stole it from the soldiers, but theirs won’t work. We lost Richie when he decided to barge in before everyone else”.

“So that roar was indeed his, then?” grinned Mike after putting on the goggles. “I knew it sounded like a lion”.

“Don’t be relieved so fast,” warned Stan, “we have incomings”.

“Can’t go back my way,” informed Mike, “I blocked the exit path for the others. We have to circle around from the main warehouse”.

“That was you? Shaking the whole building?” exclaimed Stan. “Wow,

it wa—”

As Stan opened the door they had come from, they were welcomed with blinding flashlights to their faces, and an instant later, the sound of gunshots.

Only, nothing had hit them because Mike had put back whatever he had on earlier, and now everything was ricochetting from their shield. Stan had also instantly regained his composure and detonated another knock-out grenade, clearing their path.

“So, back to our topic,” resumed Stan like he hadn’t been interrupted by armed soldiers shooting at them, “how did you do whatever you did again?”

“I destroyed the path leading to the door,” said Mike casually, “by shooting miniature force-field balls to the ceiling and ground”.

They spent the next several minutes backtracking the path Stan and Jane had taken, occasionally fighting the soldiers. Jane would disarm them and slam them to the wall or the ceiling, Stan would detonate a grenade, knocking them out, and Mike would fire a shield-ball thing towards them. Going through the building, they encountered 2 more teams, raising the number of knocked out opponents to about a dozen. When they reached the main warehouse, they were approached by a van driven by none other than Beverly. If Jane hadn’t recognized the red-haired driver, she would’ve probably flipped the van already.

“Get in!” yelled Bev. “We need to leave, now!”

“Beverly?” Stan asked incredulously. “When did you learn to drive?”

“Five minutes ago, but that’s not important,” interjected Beverly. Jane would love to argue about the importance of that information, but Beverly continued before she could say anything. “They know we’re here. More are coming. We have to go, now”.

Mike immediately protested. “But Richie—”

“—is with Will. They’re on the move,” Beverly cut in again. “Five more vans are coming, not to mention the helicopter”. As Beverly

mentioned, Jane noticed the sound of chopper above them. *Shit, has it been there the whole time?*

“Then we have to get the others,” protested Stan. “We have a van, it won’t take long”.

“No, Stan. *We* are going to lead them away from the others,” snapped Beverly. “All of us have firepower. We can be the bait. The other group is stealthier than us. As long as we get their attention, they can get away. Got it?”

When it was clear that neither Stan nor Mike were going to object, Beverly smirked. “Good. Now get in here, and fry whatever tracking chips this thing has”.

About an hour later, they finally managed to lose the helicopter and the chasing vans (thanks to Bev’s newly acquired driving skill, Stan’s tampering with the traffic lights — though admittedly only caused minor disruptions, and Mike and Jane’s random projecting stuff towards the chopper). They quickly discarded the van and started going on foot, faster than a usual walk but not yet running.

“So, you’re Mike, right?” smiled Beverly. “I’m Beverly. Will and Richie talked about you a lot”.

“They did?” Mike bewildered. Bev just nodded.

“When did you talk to Richie about Mike?” inquired Stan.

“I’m sure you haven’t thought about this, but Richie doesn’t shut up even when he turns into an animal,” grinned Bev. “I was bored behind El’s back so I entertained him”.

“So, did you talk to Will before you came for us?” asked Mike.

“I told him to run, and we’ll rendezvous later,” provided Bev. “Oh, that reminded me”. She approached Mike and punched him hard on the shoulder.

“Ouch!”

“That was from Will,” stated Bev. “He told me to tell you that you’re a stupid idiot”.

“Fair enough,” mumbled Mike unhappily. He then approached Jane and extended a hand. “Hi, I’m Mike”.

“El,” said Jane, shaking Mike’s hand bashfully. She wasn’t going to introduce herself using her old name. That name brought up too many sad memories. This new name given to her felt like a fresh start, where she could leave her story behind and start anew.

“Guys,” called out Stan before running towards a door in a dark alley, “I found the place to stay the night”.

It was a back door of a restaurant, with digital lock. Stan easily opened it, and the next moment they were all inside the restaurant kitchen.

“Now we should discuss what we’ve found out,” stated Beverly, not a request but yet to be a command.

#018

Richie must’ve had the stupidest, most idiotic, altruistic, philanthropic pain in the ass for a brother. And no, that wasn’t a compliment.

He was well aware that he was using tautology. He was also well aware that he was using big words. Richie didn’t use big words. He used short, easy-to-understand words so more people would get his jokes. Big words were Stan’s forte. *Fuck Mike!* Now Richie was fuming over Mike’s reckless action. That was also not his thing. He was the reckless one. *I’m turning into Stan, and I don’t like it.*

"That's not Mike," came a voice behind his 'attacker'. The voice belonged to the smallest of the three — probably 6 inches shorter than Richie. His hazel eyes were glued to Richie, looking kind of sheepish. If he noticed Richie wasn't Mike that fast, then he must've been the infamous Will that Mike and Beverly had spoken of so fondly.

The boy next to Will, only an inch taller or so, was also eyeing him warily with his brown eyes. His posture somehow reminded Richie of an angry chihuahua, and Richie almost laughed at that thought. The close proximity between him and the boy currently pinning Richie to the wall suggested that they had been close for a while now. See? Just because Richie acted stupidly, didn't mean that Richie was actually stupid. He could notice a lot of thing in the heat of the moment.

Speaking of 'heat of the moment', the boy who had slammed Richie against the wall — auburn hair, greenish or blueish eyes (can't tell under the moonlight), maybe an inch shorter than Richie but definitely had broader shoulder — had just let him go. He had mentioned something about... Mike... doing something stupid.

"You're R-Richie, then?" asked the boy.

"What did Mike do?" inquired Richie, ignoring the question towards him. "Where is he?"

All three boys instantly broke eye contact with him.

"What happened?"

Seriously, Mike had done this twice in the last 30 hours already. This self-sacrificing thing was not healthy at all. Granted, Richie hadn't known what had happened the first time, and *maybe* that had been necessary, but this time had totally been uncalled for. If Will hadn't immediately contacted Bev, made her promise to find Mike, and guaranteed Richie that if they left right then, all 8 of them would be safe, then Richie would've barged into the building to drag Mike out himself. *Of course that was reckless, but I'm supposed to be the reckless one, not Mike.* Later, when they had all been safe, Will and Bev had talked, and they had agreed to meet some time today, but the details

would be worked out later, in case there were more incidents.

Richie's thoughts were interrupted by Will entering the kitchen of the house they had broken in at night — where Richie was right now. Richie decided to test something he had witnessed last night (or earlier that day, he didn't know and couldn't care less).

"G'morning, Little Willy," greeted Richie loudly and cheerfully, using his Englishman Voice.

"Good morning, Richie," greeted Will tiredly, wincing at the volume Richie had used. "Do they have anything to eat?"

"If you fancy cereal without milk," replied Richie. Will then proceeded towards the counter and reached for the cereal box in the kitchen cabinet above said counter.

After that brief conversation, Richie was pretty sure of two things. First, Will was a sweet cinnamon roll. He was too nice to tell Richie to lower his volume, even if it was deafening and he had just woken up. That had actually made Richie feel guilty for once. And second, Will had a crush on Richie's twin brother.

They had made it to safety without too much struggling. Which was completely expected if your team has a member with Tracking Evasion, another with Danger Intuition, and one was a wolf with heightened senses. Long story short, they had walked to the "white picket fence" part of town, and Richie had broken into an empty house via the dog door in the back, and opened the door for the others. The house was homey, with a lot of family photos, so the owners had probably only left for a winter vacation.

"So, let's get to introduction, yeah?" said Richie once they had all gotten inside. "I still don't know your names, although," Richie turned to Will, "I have a feeling you're Bev's Will, the one who can see the future, right?"

Will gave Richie a shy nod.

"The same as Mike's Little Willy, right?" Richie wiggled his eyebrows suggestively, grinning as Will began to blush.

"I— Wha— It's— No—" stammered Will, "it's just Will".

Interesting, thought Richie. He wondered whether Will was blushing because of the barely dirty nickname (that kid had to be a 5 year-old to blush at that), the teasing about his size (possible but not probable), or the notion that he was Mike's (most likely, considering how much Bev had heard about Mike from Will — which was a lot).

"Well, nice to finally meet you, Willy," winked Richie playfully. Will decided to take his bag to the bathroom at the end of the hall.

"I'm B-B-Bill," said the boy who had slammed Richie to the wall. "Mike t-t-told me a lot about y-you".

"Great to meet you too, Billiam," replied Richie, grinning. He then turned to the final member of his current group. "What about you, little guy?"

The boy scowled. "Eddie. And don't call me that".

Richie's grin had only grown wider. "Cute, cute, cute. I think I like you, Eds".

The boy glared harder, which only made Richie want to laugh because of how much he resembled a chihuahua. "Don't call me cute! And don't call me that either!"

"I'll call you whatever I like," Richie replied with his unwavering grin.

"Good morning, Bill, Eddie," Will's voice cut through Richie's flashback.

"G'morning, chaps. Billy, Eds," greeted Richie, back to his Englishman.

"Don't call me that!" Eddie grumbled. Richie ignored his complain.

"Fancy some cereal on this wonderful day?" asked Richie, grabbing the box of cereal on the counter (that Will had had) and sliding it towards Bill.

“So, Billy boy,” started Richie, not even waiting for Bill to finish pouring cereal to the bowl he just got for himself, “you can remove traces, right? So when we leave this house, the owner won’t even know we were here, right?”

“That’s *not* how m-my power works at all,” huffed Bill. “I can remove tr-traces, so there won’t be any fingerpr-pr-prints or DNA samples of us left behind. They still k-know somebody b-broke in if you don’t put their s-s-stuff back where they belong, a-and they’ll definitely know if their cereal b-b-boxes suddenly disappear”.

“Ouch,” winced Richie, feigning hurt, “I was hoping to get away from the cleaning”. He then turned to Eddie, who was making an effort of looking anywhere but at Richie. “Eddie Spaghetti”.

“Don’t call me *that* either,” replied Eddie.

“Oh c’mon,” whined Richie, “that one is perfect”. *Grumpy boy, I’ll make you like me.*

“If you’re that bad at nicknaming, I suggest you stop doing it,” deadpanned Eddie.

“Fat chance, Eds,” Richie grinned. “What’s your power anyway? I don’t think you’ve mentioned”.

Eddie glared at Richie, but otherwise acted like he hadn’t heard the nickname. “My power is healing. I can heal wound”.

“Ooh,” Richie perked up, “so you’ll be like a nurse tending to the injured”. He reached out and pinched Eddie’s cheek. “Cute, cute, *cute*”.

After the initial shock of physical contact (probably), Eddie forcefully swatted Richie’s hand away and scowled harder (Richie didn’t think it was possible). “Get that fucking hand away from me! Who knows what kind of bacterias have permanently nested there”.

“Richie, c-could you please let poor Eddie f-f-finish his breakfast before ha-harassing him?” Bill sighed.

“No can do, Billy boy,” Richie smiled innocently (or at least that was

his idea of smiling innocently — Mike always said it looked evil). “He’s just too fun to tease”.

“Forget it, Big Bill,” said Eddie, rolling his eyes. “He’s not the type of people you should reason with”. *Ouch, that hurts.*

“Big Bill, huh?” Richie smirked. “Bold claim. Anything I should know about you two?” He laughed out loud when receiving an eye roll from Bill and a spoon of dry cereal to the face from Eddie.

Richie hadn’t noticed Will’s eerie silence until Bill and Eddie had finished their breakfast. Turning to check on him, Richie found Will sitting by the counter, with his eyes closed and his head slightly bowed down. *Just like how he looked yesterday when he was talking to Bev.* The others must’ve noticed as well, since the chatter had died down. Everyone stayed silent (which was very unusual if your name was Richie Tozier), waiting for Will to return to them with news.

After what seemed to be forever to Richie, Will finally opened his eyes, slightly surprised that he had already had the attention of everyone in the room.

“So, the other group has acquired some information from the attack,” started Will. “Beverly managed to read a soldier’s mind and learned that, they hadn’t known our location before. They were the reinforcement sent from other facilities, sent out to search at some of the potential locations. I guess we need to find a less obvious place to hide next time”.

“Richie’s friend, Stan, from the other group is a technopath,” Will continued, “and he got his hand on one of their tablets. He had managed to get the list of all escaped metas, and the exact coordinates of the other labs. He is working on getting the location of their units, but that information is a bit more tricky to get”.

“The area we are in still hasn’t attracted their attention, so we should be safe for the day. Stan managed to disable all the cameras on the street, but I don’t think we should leave the house unless it’s extremely urgent”.

“The other group is coming to us at the moment, since they didn’t have a place to hide during the day. I’m tracking them now, and with their current pace, they should get here within 2 hours”.

After confirming that Will had done summarizing his conversation, Richie started the discussion.

“As comfortable as it is staying in this house and waiting for them, I don’t think this place is safe enough for all 8 of us,” said Richie. “I can go out as a stray dog or maybe a bird, and look for an abandoned house or something. I’ll probably die if I get stuck in this place for another day anyway”. Richie grinned at that.

“I d-don’t think it’s a good idea,” Bill’s brow furrowed.

“Funny, that’s also what your mom said last night,” Richie smirked, satisfied to see Bill let out an displeased huff. “Don’t worry, nobody is going to pay attention to an animal. Plus, Willy can keep an eye on me”. He reasoned, “Can you honestly look me in the eye, and tell me, that 8 kids breaking into a house, and staying there until the owner gets home, whenever that is, is a good idea?”

When nobody answered, Richie grinned triumphantly. “That’s what I thought”.

#022

Mike had never felt more helpless than he had been yesterday.

Let’s get something out of the way first. Despite being a teleporter, Mike feared being buried alive. That fear had manifested when he had been a child (maybe about 5), watching that old Mummy movie on television, and seeing the terrible punishment at the very beginning of said movie. Now, along with every other rational fear he had had back then, like the fear of being eaten by flesh-eating bugs,

or the fear that a mummy would get to your room through your keyhole, Mike had grown out of it by reasoning that the chance of someone trapping him inside a coffin was extremely low, and with modern technology, nobody would thought he was dead when in fact he was in a deep coma (hopefully). So by now, that fear of being trapped in a coffin had turned into a more reasonable fear of being buried underground when a cave or tunnel collapsed, or since he had his power, being stuck inside a wall (Mike didn't know if it was possible and he didn't want to find out).

So, understandably, Mike had barely slept the first night he had been free, due to the fact that he (and his two new friends) had spent the night in a secret room underground. When Lucas had mentioned he could create a hideout for them, every fiber in his body had wanted to protest. But of course, being a 13 year-old (maybe 14, since he had been locked up for so long he couldn't have known for sure) meant having to think more logically than a little kid, and Mike had known that had been their best option. Furthermore, Lucas could control the earth, and Mike was a teleporter, so logically speaking, he would've been safe from that being buried alive scenario. But the funny thing about fear was, despite all logical thinking, all pep talks, it was still there anyway. So he had spent the entire night tossing and turning, trying to calm his nerves and get some sleep. He had managed to sleep for about an hour though, but by then the sun had definitely gone up, and once everyone had woken up, he had instantly offered to go out and get some food.

That lack of sleep had been a joyful summer day compared to his encounter with Pain and Panic not even an hour after he had gone to get food yesterday. Pain was... uh... painful. Not so creative there, but at that moment he had only thought about how he wanted to pass out, lose consciousness, or even die, anything to get out of that misery. The moment Pain's eyes had turned sickly green, it had felt like Mike had been stabbed by thousands of white-hot knives. His bones had felt like molten lead, and his skin had felt like being dipped in boiling acid. Mike hadn't experienced much pain before, but he was sure there was nothing more painful than that.

If Pain had been all about physical torture (although there had been no mark of that), then Panic had been more fond of mental

traumatizing. Under his illusion, Mike had been buried alive. He couldn't breathe because of all the weight of the earth pressing on his chest. He couldn't get away because every time he had tried teleporting away, he had ended up being in the exact situation. Mike briefly wondered if he, Lucas, and Max hadn't been saved by Ben and Dustin (as he had recently learned their names), whether they would have literally been scared to death.

Unlike Pain's effect, which had disappeared the instant he had been stopped, Panic's power had given a lingering feeling that had disrupted Lucas, Max, and Mike's powers. Mike hadn't been able to teleport anywhere, Lucas had been randomly shaking the ground, and it had definitely felt a little too warm around Max. Ben had been a great help in keeping all their powers in control (Mike hadn't been sure if he would randomly teleport but he hadn't wanted to risk it) on their entire ride back to Steve's house. Steve was the one who had found the five of them in the wood, and had graciously offered to take them back to his house (although he had acted like he had had no other choice). Mike had been wary at first, but they hadn't been in any condition to refuse help, and Ben had assured them that Steve was also one of them (people with powers, not lab experiments). The moment Mike's back had touched the sofa Steve had said they could use, fatigue had hit him like a train, and he had slept from yesterday afternoon to about 7am today.

Right now they were all sitting around the kitchen table, listening to Lucas, Dustin, and Ben recounting their stories since the explosion. Dustin was friendly, chatty, and cheerful. He apparently had befriended Lucas already. Ben was also friendly, but in a shy way, despite probably having known all the other kids in the room already.

“— and then *you* showed up and freaked out on all of us,” concluded Dustin, addressing Steve. “How did you know we were there anyway?”

“Drop the attitude, dipshit,” chided Steve. “You know how in the movies, you can listen to the background music and know something is happening? Well I can feel that, without the background music, if

that something is nearby. You assholes have been putting me on edge since the day before yesterday”.

“So, are you saying you know when something’s about to happen somewhere close to you?” asked Lucas. “Like knowing the future or something?”

“Are you even paying attention?” scowled Steve. “That’s not what I said at all. I said I know if something *is happening*. And I don’t know the exact location. The feeling grows when you get closer to the source”.

“And you just swoop in and help?” inquired Max, raising an eyebrow.

“Hey, nobody is making you stay here. You’re free to leave if you want”.

“So how many of these, uh, feelings, have you had lately?” asked Ben, trying to keep the atmosphere friendly, although everyone knew none of them were actually being mean.

“Maybe 4 or 5,” replied Steve. “The first big one was probably your explosion. The newest one happened yesterday, when you all had gone to sleep”.

“What happened?” asked Mike.

“Dunno. You don’t exactly find out about this kind of event on TV, and the event was too far away. I wasn’t exactly eager to leave my house at midnight to find out when you delinquents were sleeping right here”.

“How did you not get caught by them when you live so close?” asked Max.

“By lying low and not poking my nose somewhere I shouldn’t,” stated Steve simply. “None of my parents have powers, so they probably didn’t find out about me. And my power isn’t the flashy type that attracts attention, so I don’t have to worry about anyone seeing it. My turn,” interrupted Steve. “How wasn’t your clothes burning when you use your fire?”

Max shrugged, and Dustin made the most scandalous expression Mike had ever seen.

“Are you kidding me?” exclaimed Dustin. “Am I the only one who knows about this stuff?”

When everyone (but Ben) gave Dustin a questioning look, he continued. “It’s called *Required Secondary Powers*. It’s there to prevent shit like that from happening. Like, if I run at max speed, theoretically speaking, all my clothes and shoes won’t be able to handle that kind of friction, and I will create sonic booms that can turn everyone here into mush. So, unbeknown to me, my powers do something to prevent that from happening. The same happens to Max’s fire”.

“How did you know about that?” asked Lucas.

“You see, there’s this place called *the library*,” said Dustin sarcastically.

“There are books about this in *the library*?” asked Mike incredulously.

“Sure, in the science fiction section”.

Steve snorted, and Dustin immediately glared at him.

“Hey! Unless *you* know something we don’t, that is the best way to explain all these shits”.

“Okay, okay. Jeez,” Steve rolled his eyes. “Look, my parents are going on a vacation, so you assholes can stay here for now. But they’re going back eventually so I suggest you start planning something before that happens”.

Everyone mumbled in acknowledgement, but nobody made an effort to discuss the topic. Mike watched as Lucas fell into a conversation with Max, and Dustin started talking about random things with Steve, while Ben was looking at a bird outside the kitchen window distractedly. He, like everyone else, were aware that they couldn’t be freeloaders for long, and he also would want some space to practice his power. But right now he was tired of having to run away all the time for the last 2 days, and a small break before going back to

reality wouldn't hurt. He then joined Dustin and Steve's conversation, which was revolving around pop culture and recent movies.

Notes for the Chapter:

So I've officially had all 13 main characters' POVs as of this chapter. Starting from the next chapter, I'll include the name of each character next to their number for you to keep track of.

So, Steve Harrington's power: Danger Detection (sort of)

Also, before I started writing this fic, I've made the Index that the people at the lab would make for the kids. I actually made it like a legit thing with stamps and tables and so on, but I think I'll share part of it with you guys (without the format, obv)

011 : Ives, Jane: Telekinesis (Level: Beta - Type: Offense)

- Object Sensing: being aware of surrounding objects
- Telekinesis: being able to move objects around and/or destroy objects with their mind

018 : Tozier, Richard: Biomorphing (Level: Alpha - Type: Espionage)

- Biomorphing: being able to transform into other living beings

022 : Hanlon, Michael: Teleportation (Level: Alpha - Type: Offense, Espionage)

- Teleportation: being able to transport self and/or others through space

That's it for this update. See you next time!

6. A little birdie

Summary for the Chapter:

If anyone had seen Ben that moment, they would've thought he was losing his mind.

[...]

Mike couldn't stop himself from glancing at a certain brown-haired someone.

[...]

Will hadn't felt this safe for since forever.

Notes for the Chapter:

Hi guys!

I'm terribly sorry for this very late update. Life happened and I found myself with significantly less time to write. However, the new chapter is here now and I hope it's worth the wait.

Enjoy!

#024 - Ben Hanscom

If anyone had seen Ben that moment, they would've thought he was losing his mind. Or a bird whisperer. Whichever made more sense to them. Honestly, with his current life, he couldn't tell anymore.

He had first felt the presence of another like him in the middle of Dustin's rant. Someone had been somewhere outside their kitchen window. At first glance, Ben hadn't seen anyone, but that had been predictable — whoever had been there had probably used their powers to stay hidden from view. Understandable, but not very useful for going against Ben, as he had only needed to actively use his radar

to pinpoint their location. The source of the powers had come from a yellowish green bird landing on the fence just outside the window. That had eliminated most of the spying abilities Ben had met, leaving only Bird Manipulation, and Shapeshifting. However, based on the power intensity of the bird, being a lot stronger than that of one being the target of an ability, Ben had bet on it being the Shapeshifter.

Once everyone had stopped the interrogation and started to have their own little conversations, Ben had stepped out to the backyard to talk to their uninvited guest.

“Hey,” started Ben awkwardly, “I, uh, I know you can understand me”.

The bird, just slightly bigger than his fist, tilted its head towards Ben. He thought it was a good sign that whoever that was hadn’t flown away despite being spotted, so he continued.

“I guess you’ve heard our story from the fence, but if you haven’t, we’ve just broken out of the lab nearby a couple of days ago, and we really appreciate if you can help us find somewhere to hide”.

The bird started chirping, and Ben felt stupid for trying to communicate in this situation.

“Look, obviously I can’t understand you right now,” Ben said frustratedly. “If I’m correct and you’re the shapeshifter, can you circle around the house and find the bathroom window on the first floor? We can get in there and you can change into something that’s easier to talk to”.

The bird chirped in what Ben assumed to be agreement before flying away. Ben stepped back into the kitchen and realized that most of his companions had moved to the living room. The only one in the kitchen besides him was Mike, and he was giving Ben a funny look. Ben gave him a timid smile before heading towards the bathroom. As soon as he closed the door, Ben was greeted with his own voice.

“Something easier to talk to?” Ben turned around to see the exact replica of himself, sitting on the toilet lid, wearing a devious grin the

troublemakers in his old class used to wear before disrupting a lesson. "I'm sorry, mate, but that sounds like discrimination to me," Ben's clone said in a very bad British accent.

Despite knowing the guy (is he even a guy?) could shapeshift, being met with a copy of himself in a bathroom still came as a shock for Ben. Was he *that* chubby? Was his hair *that* messy? He always thought his hair was darker than what he was seeing, but apparently it was light brown. He also didn't think his cheeks were that pink. Or was it because of the other guy? He wondered if—

"Hello?" The other Ben waved his hand in front of Ben, snapping him out of his thought. "I thought you wanted to talk?"

"Right, sorry," said Ben hastily. "I'm Ben. What's your name?"

"Call me Richie," the other guy — Richie — replied with a grin. "So, you guys also want to find somewhere to hide?"

"Wait, so you don't have anywhere to hide?" Ben asked sheepishly. He hadn't thought about this. He didn't want to add to Richie's burden if that was the case.

"My group has a place to stay, but it won't be able to hold everyone so I was—"

Pop.

"I knew Ben was acting strange," a third (second) voice rang unexpectedly, which had emitted a rather embarrassing high-pitched yelp from Richie, in Ben's voice. Mike had popped in with an amusing grin, and was now sitting on the edge of the bathtub. "So do you have a secret evil twin?"

Before either of them had the chance to answer, Dustin's muffled voice rang from behind the closed bathroom door.

"Ben? Is everything alright?"

Ben shot Mike a pleading look before answering. "Yeah. I stubbed my toe. Don't worry".

“Okay. Be careful, man”.

Mike waited until Dustin’s footsteps were no longer audible before he started.

“Okay, does anyone care to explain?” Mike spoke in a low voice.

“Richie, this is Mike,” Ben started the introduction, “he’s a teleporter. Mike, this is Richie, shapeshifter. I was asking if he had a hideout we could use”.

“Cool, so why are we keeping it a secret?” Mike enquired.

“I didn’t know if he’d help, so I don’t want to raise your hopes up with a wild goose chase,” explained Ben. “Plus, if it was 6 against 1, it’d look like we’re bullying him into helping us”.

“No need to worry about that, Benny Boy,” interrupted Richie with a grin, “you can’t fucking make me do something. And as I was saying before we got interrupted, I was looking for a place for my group to stay. Maybe I can help you guys with that while I’m at it”.

“How many are there in your group?” Ben asked excitedly. He always liked to make new friends. “Maybe we can all team up”.

“That does sound like a good idea,” Richie contemplated, “but I’m already having a huge ass problem finding a place for 8 fucking people. So unless you guys have any brilliant ideas, big groups aren’t exactly working in our favor, no matter how much I enjoy it, if you know what I mean,” Richie wiggled his brows suggestively, which made Ben slightly blush. He had never met anyone who talked like this kid, and he didn’t know how to respond to that. Ben cleared his throat and decided to ignore the last comment.

“Dustin and I hid inside the local high school yesterday,” provided Ben. “It’s definitely spacious enough for all of us”.

“I think it’s a lot easier for 2 people to hide in a school than it is for 14—”

“13,” interrupted Mike. “The guy from this house said he won’t be joining us”.

“Okay then, for 13 kids to do so,” Richie continued like he hadn’t been interrupted. “Don’t know about you, but I tend to be quite *loud* in the right setting,” he said mischievously.

“What if we find an abandoned building or something?” Ben asked. “I mean, this place must have some old buildings that nobody is using anymore, right?”

“Right,” Richie said amusingly, “semi-public places would’ve been my first choice, if we hadn’t done that already”.

“What happened?” Mike asked curiously.

“We are not the only ones with that thought,” Richie said casually. “Apparently, the bad guys have been looking at abandoned buildings for us as well. Last night was fucking chaotic, I’m giving you that”.

Ben nodded as he remembered Steve’s earlier conversation. He looked to Mike to see him wearing a somewhat hesitant look.

“What if,” Mike said slowly, “we build ourselves a secret hideout?”

“Do you guys have some interesting ass powers? Because I don’t know anyone who can do that,” said Richie.

“We have someone who can control the earth,” provided Mike. “He made a secret room for us near the local high school. It’s better to ask him first, but I think he could make one big enough for 13 people. We also have someone with Pyrokinesis so the heating won’t be a problem”.

“Yeah, Lucas can definitely do it,” Ben chimed in. “I worked with him back in the lab a couple times. With my boost, he can definitely make an underground facility bigger than that lab”.

“Well, that sounds nice and all,” said Richie, “but we still don’t have a location”.

“We can go back to the forest,” Ben suggested. “There’s plenty of space there, and we don’t have to worry about running into people”.

“That’s not a good idea,” Richie grimaced. “Sure there’s less

interaction with people, but it gives them the fucking chance to go all out on us". He contemplated the situation before adding, "I think it's better to stay in town. Somewhere not too crowded, but enough so people would notice if they tried to do anything big. They still want to keep us a secret, so we'll give them something to fucking think about before going in," Richie said with a devious grin.

"You do realize that would make fighting back a lot more difficult if we don't want innocent people to get hurt, right?" Ben asked.

"We don't have to fight," Richie shrugged. "We can just scoot away if they corner us. Micycle here can teleport others out. My group also has a fucking shield and someone to erase our fucking traces. We have plenty of resources to help us get the fuck away before they even arrive".

Ben and Mike pondered over the situation for a while.

"I think it could work," said Mike finally. "We don't even have to find an abandoned building. It could be one of the less popular parking garages, or any places that's not always crowded but not totally deserted".

"Yeah, it could work," Ben agreed. "We'd need to talk to Lucas first, though".

"You guys do that," Richie nodded, "I'm gonna find my group and inform them of this new, uh, development. Don't have too much fun without me, boys. I'll be back before you know it," he gave Ben and Mike a final grin before turning back into a bird and flew through the window.

Ben was now left alone with Mike in the bathroom, and whether it was the setting or because they hadn't talked much, his social skills had decided to go out the window along with Richie. He also didn't know whether he should address the fact that he had just sneaked someone into the house.

"Well that was interesting," said Mike, interrupting Ben's thought. "I don't think I've gotten over the shock of seeing two of you yet".

Ben turned to Mike and chuckled. “Yeah, he’s pretty... eccentric”. Mike laughed at his word choice.

“He’s definitely something,” Mike agreed. “Did you hear the amount of profanity that came out of his mouth?”

“Trust me, it’s hard to miss when it’s your own voice,” Ben smiled. “Anyway, we should discuss this turn of events with the others. How mad do you think they’ll be when they hear that I had brought another in without their knowledge?”

“Nah, I think you’ll be fine,” Mike grinned. “Plus, we’re in this together, so even if they decided to blame someone, you wouldn’t be the only one”.

With that note, Ben and Mike left the bathroom to join the others in the living room.

#042 - Mike Wheeler

Mike couldn’t stop himself from glancing at a certain brown-haired someone.

Despite being the less obvious twin, he wasn’t known for his subtlety. Lucky for him, El was walking 5ft in front of him, next to Stan, or else somebody would’ve definitely noticed his staring by now. The only other way anyone else were able to tell was if Bev were to read his mind, but then that wouldn’t be his fault.

Although he had spent only half a day with the two girls, he had definitely grown fond of them. Beverly was Will’s closest friend while he was inside that lab, so it was understandable how she and Mike got along. What intrigued him, however, was how quickly he had felt

comfortable around El. Before the lab, he had only ever felt at ease around 3 people his age. And considering how one of them was his twin brother, and another was the best friend of said brother, Will had been the only one he had actively warmed up to. Therefore Mike was not exaggerating when saying his friend circle had more than doubled within 24 hours with Bill, Eddie, Beverly, and El.

Mike had felt some kind of harmony last night while fighting alongside El. A rhythm that they could immediately fall back on without having to communicate. That had been something only Richie and Will could do, so he was understandably intrigued. El also didn't act like the vast majority of girls in his old school. While the other girls liked to stay in groups giggling about things (he had never been close enough to know what they giggled about), El seemed to prefer quiet alone time, and only express her emotions through her eyebrows. She also gave a strong independent aura which hinted that she was capable of protecting herself, and that you wouldn't want to be on her bad side. In one sentence, she was the most intimidating kid Mike had ever met.

However, after spending some time with El, Mike had noticed another side of her. When their lives weren't on the line, her brown eyes were soft and relax, and she often wore a curious look as if she had seen something interesting and was wondering about it. In those moments, Mike felt the whole world was an enormous library, and El was the eager student spending days inside that library, trying to absorb every single book she had laid her hands on. Mike would've understood the thirst for knowledge, after all he and Will hadn't been called nerds for nothing, if it hadn't been triggered by the most random things like an oven or a tablet.

His mind gradually wandered to another brown-haired, brown-eyed individual that he hadn't seen in half a day (which had felt a lot longer due to recent events). Mike tended to worry about Will a lot. Will had always been singled out by bullies, and his bashful nature meant that Mike had usually ended up getting into trouble defending Will. Will hadn't wanted that, but it wasn't like Mike was gonna stand by and watch his best friend getting picked on by jerks who wanted to hide their insecurities behind the illusion of having power over weaker kids. However, this time Mike wouldn't be around to

help Will. Well, he had sort of helped luring the bad guys away from the other group, but if anything happened before they regrouped, Richie would be the only line of defense.

Which led Mike to another person he was currently worrying about. Mike trusted his brother with most things in his life, but safety wasn't one of them. His brother's plans weren't anywhere close to foolproof, and whenever it went wrong, Richie's backup plans always involved putting himself on the line for the safety of others (definitely *not* a family trait), and Mike had only just gotten him back after a year. If somehow Richie got himself captured again, Mike would murder him as soon as he got him out.

What? Beverly's voice interrupted his train of thought.

What what? Mike thought back, sending her a quizzical look. He didn't think he'd get used to this type of communication anytime soon.

You called me, stated Bev.

No, I didn't, replied Mike confusingly. He would've known if he had thought about her.

It was definitely your voice calling my name, Bev's eyebrows furrowed.

Before Mike could say anything, something landed on his head, and he let out an embarrassing yelp as he tried to swat whatever it was away. As Stan and El turned around to look, Mike had managed to locate the source of the commotion: a fucking bird. Bev started cackling when the bird circled around, undoubtedly aiming for Mike's head again. *This is fucking ridiculous,* thought Mike. Here he was, running away from the bad people at the lab, who had turned his life upside down once again within the last 12 hours, with no real plan on where they would go after they met, and on top of that, he had to be attacked by a bird the size of a fist? It was true that his hair had gotten more curly and messy throughout the years, but there was no way it could be mistaken for a bird's nest, no matter what Richie wanted to— *Oh!*

Realization washed over him as he gave up the fight and let the bird

land on his head. “Ha ha, very funny,” Mike deadpanned. “I swear, if you poop on my head, I’m gonna lock you in my force-field for the rest of your life,” he said exasperatedly.

“Why are you talking to a bird?” El gave Mike a weird look. Stan, however, had realized what was happening and snorted.

“Orange-crowned warblers aren’t supposed to be in this region this time of the year, *Richie*”.

Richie started chirping, which had earned a snort from Beverly. “I’m not telling him that. You go do that when you’re back in your human form,” she said amusingly. He started chirping again, and Mike had to clear his throat to get both Richie and Bev’s attention.

“Not to be rude, but why are you here, Richie?” Mike tensed up, already thought about what could have gone wrong with the other group.

“Mike, relax,” Beverly said after a moment of listening to Richie’s chirping. “The others are fine. Richie just had an idea he wanted to share with us. I can do the translating, but we probably should find a place where it’s not suspicious for 4 kids to gather around”.

“—so we need to find a place crowded enough to not get into situations like yesterday, but not enough to be noticed by locals,” Stan finished summarizing Richie’s plan. “I have to say, Richie, this so far has been the best plan I’ve heard coming from you”.

Richie chirped, whether in agreement or protest Mike didn’t know. They had gone to the local arcade, because that had been the only logical place Mike could think of for 4 kids to gather on winter break. It had been a simple task sneaking a bird inside, so currently they were all standing inside a photo booth, discussing their next destination, with Richie occasionally hopping between Mike’s and Stan’s shoulders. Stan had used the booth’s monitor to display the town map, with 3 red dots indicating the location of their groups of

escapees. He was now highlighting a building approximately in the center of their triangle.

“This building here seems perfect for our goal,” Stan continued. “This is a parking garage of the local self storage. Both places are still in use so there will occasionally be people around, but not too often to notice us. Plus, it’s relatively the same distance from all of us. There are several other options, but they’re all a lot further away from Will’s group, and so far they’re the ones without the ability to fight”.

“Okay, I need you to describe the place to me in full details,” said Beverly. “I’ll contact Will and explain this to him. We should discuss this with them first”.

“How do you go to that place with Will, anyway?” Mike asked suddenly. “Will told me it felt like opening a door, or turning a switch to him. Was it the same for you?”

“Uh, actually no,” Bev baffled. “It’s hard to explain. It’s like my mind and body are two separate things, and I have to push my mind away, to whatever it was”.

“Have you tried, like, bringing someone else’s mind along with you?”

#060 - Will Byers

Will hadn’t felt this safe for since forever.

Once upon a time he had felt safe with his family and with Mike, but when his powers had started to develop, he had always felt kind of on edge. It had something to do with his ability to know when something bad was about to happen, and back when he had constantly been bullied by kids at school, that had been on a daily

basis. That or the unseen danger of being captured by MEDUSA. He couldn't be sure, he hadn't even been aware of his powers back then. Since he hadn't known about his powers, he wouldn't have known what he had been drawing was prophetic, or else he wouldn't have given it to his art teacher. That must have been how they knew about Will. They had come on a Sunday night, when his mom and Jonathan had both been at work. Like on yesterday's event, every fiber of his body had sounded an alarm, and he had grabbed his bike and fled before they had gotten there. That had given them the perfect setting to weave a story about how he had gone out for some air and gotten lost in the wood. Of course the fleeing hadn't been so helpful, otherwise he wouldn't have been where he was right now.

Being captured by the labs meant that his powers had been growing in an unbalanced way. They had wanted to push his ability to spy on people, so they had made him do that a lot. By now, he wouldn't have any problems tracking people in the back of his mind. However, the danger sensing thing hadn't been practiced at all, since they didn't find that very useful to them. That had been why he still hadn't gotten the hang of it, and why he had raised his voice last night, to Mike of all people. Right now, however, things felt pretty calm, and Will had decided to use his power to check on his family. He closed his eyes and let himself drift to that room he went to to search for people. The "room" was a manifestation of a part of his mind. Everyone had areas in their brain that was in charge of different functions, such as speech, language, sights, and so on. Will had an extra part in his mind that controls his ability to locate people, a part that was visualized as a room, where he could enter to access his full potential. He didn't need to do that if he only wanted to know where someone was, but right now he wanted to see his mom as well.

In his "tracking room", there was a spinning sphere that represented the world, with lots of dimly lit yellow points on it that corresponded to every single person he had ever seen, whether in real life, on TV, or via a photo somewhere. Will focused on the memories of his mom, of how she made him feel, and almost immediately one of the dimly lit spots shone brightly. The point then grew bigger and bigger as other things faded away, until the sphere was replaced by a hologram of his mom in Melvald's cashier outfit. She was probably at work,

seeing how it was in the middle of the day. His mom looked thin and broken, like the last time he had checked on her (which had been that morning when he had woken up), but that wasn't a surprise considering how she must've thought her little boy was dead. Will had the urge to wrap his arms around her figure and hug her, but fought against it. The last time he'd done that, the hologram had been blurred for a good minute. At first he had wanted to find her, contact her, and tell her he's alright, but after last night's event at the warehouse, he knew that would only put his family in more danger than he'd ever imagine them in. He focused on Jonathan next, and another figure appeared, separated from the first one. A map also appeared in the background, showing two dots that represented the location of two people he was currently tracking. Jonathan was sitting in his house, looking more composed than his mom, but a single look at his eyes told Will that it was all an act. Will knew he could never be with his family again unless MED was shut down, so this was all he'd allow himself to do.

After a while, Will dismissed the two holograms and focused on Mike, Beverly, and Richie instead. The three images formed quickly, with Mike and Beverly walking side by side, and Richie in his bird form, flying. There was nothing Will could do for these guys either, but it was still better, knowing their whereabouts. He put the tracking in the back of his mind and got back to the real world, to see that he wasn't alone in the kitchen anymore.

"Is everything okay?" Will asked Bill as the other kid was looking directly at him.

"Y-yeah, everything's fine," Bill replied with a smile. "Eddie is t-taking a shower, so I thought I c-could use another p-person's company, even when their m-mind is somewhere else".

"S-sorry," Will replied timidly, "I was just checking on the others".

"It's okay," Bill gave him a kind smile. "So, you l-like to draw?"

"Uh, yeah," said Will, taken aback, "how did you know?"

Bill smirked. "Well, Mike might have m-mentioned it once or twice, or, y-you know, 30 times".

“H-he did?” Will asked embarrassedly.

“You and R-Richie were the only two topics he talked about,” Bill provided, and Will couldn’t help but blush. “Don’t worry, he had nothing but k-kind words about you,” Bill gave him a knowing look.

Wait, does Bill know? Was I that obvious? Does he hate me because of it? Oh my god, does Mike know?

“Th-thanks,” Will flustered. “Mike was just being a good friend, though”.

“M-maybe, but I don’t th-think that was the reason,” Bill stated simply. Did Bill mean what Will *thought* he meant, that Will was a good person? Or was he saying what Will *hoped* he was saying? “I like to paint, too,” Bill said before Will had the chance to react to his earlier statement.

“Yeah? I bet you’re really good,” Will said, happy to change his train of thought. “What do you like to paint?”

“I like to p-paint landscape,” said Bill slowly. “I like to mix watercolor to-together to create different shades of color, and l-landscapes give me the best chance to do that”.

“I’d love to mess with watercolor too, but my town wasn’t very resourceful in the art department,” Will provided. “My mom works at the general store, and she used to bring me all kind of crayons, though. I mostly draw with those, so it would be really childish comparing to your paintings”.

“I don’t th-think that’s the case. Each type of drawing h-has its beauty. Plus, I’m far from g-good so if anything, mine would be the childish ones,” Bill protested. “D-do you miss your mom?” He then asked before Will had the chance to argue.

“Y-yeah,” Will replied with a sad smile. “I really want to find my family, but I know it’d put them in danger, so it’s best to stay away for now”.

“I u-understand,” Bill sympathized. “I’d d-do anything to keep my family s-safe, too”.

“But I could always check on my mom and my brother,” Will said, trying to lighten the mood. “At least I’d know they’re safe”.

“Have you b-been doing that ever since you g-got caught?” Bill asked.

“They would never let me do that,” Will said. “They could block that ability of mine in the lab, so I only started to do it yesterday”.

“So they could b-block your ability to locate other p-people, but not your ability to t-talk to your friend?” Bill asked surprisedly.

“It’s difficult to explain,” said Will. “When I use my tracking ability, I’m just somewhere in my mind. But when I go to talk to Beverly, it feels like I’ve gone to another place”. At that moment, Will noticed Beverly’s presence in The Void. “Speaking of which, I think Bev wants to talk. Do you mind if I space out?”

“No problem,” Bill smiled. “I’ll just go and ch-check on Eddie”.

With a nod, Will sent himself to The Void, and was immediately surprised. Beverly was waiting for him *with someone else*.

“Will!” Bev exclaimed as she dashed forward to hug Will. This had become a regular greeting between them. “Mike had the brilliant idea of letting me try to bring someone along when talking to you, and long story short, this is Stan”.

“Nice to meet you, Will,” Stan gave him a small smile. “Mike talked about you a lot whenever he visited Richie”. That had made Will blush *again*. Did Mike talk about him that much?

“Er, thanks,” said Will, “nice to meet you too”.

“Anyway,” Beverly said cheerfully, “Richie told us about his idea to find a new hideout. He also told us he had met others who had just escaped, and one of them could create secret lairs underground. We think it’s a good idea, but your opinions are important as well, so perhaps you’d want to discuss it with your group”.

“Don’t worry, Bill and Eddie said earlier that anywhere would be fine,” said Will. “So where do you have in mind?”

“Speaking of ‘in mind’, Beverly said this was like a shared space for minds?” Stan suddenly asked.

“Uh... Perhaps?” Will said confusedly. “It does feel like part of my mind, but at the same time part of Beverly, and now you? Also it doesn’t feel like it belong to our physical world”.

“So, have you guys tried to modify it?” Stan asked again, and Will didn’t really understand what he meant.

“What do you mean?” Beverly asked Stan. She didn’t seem to understand any more than Will.

“I mean, if this place is for shared minds, our physical forms here will be what our minds have created as avatars,” Stan explained.

“I guess?” Bev said bewilderedly. “I still don’t know where you’re going with this”.

“I mean, what if we do... this?” Stan made a gesture of projecting something from his mind, and suddenly a dozen holographic monitors appeared around them.

“Woah!” Will exclaimed. “I didn’t know we could do that! What are these?”

“I’ve been monitoring the cameras around the city,” Stan stated simply. “Cover our track when we move”.

“How did you manage to do this?” Beverly asked in amazement.

“Literally how it looks,” Stan replied. “I imagine putting all the things running in background on monitors, and projecting them out of my mind”.

“Let me try this, then,” Will said before closing his eyes. He imagined the map of the city being displayed on a screen, with his friends being the yellow beacons. When he reopened his eyes, said screen was shimmering into existence in front of his eyes.

“That is so cool!” Bev exclaimed. “Will and I have been doing this for ages and we’ve never figured these things out. You and Mike took

less than a day to come up with all these new developments”.

Will walked to his monitor and selected Mike’s beacon. The beacon turned green and Mike’s form appeared in the same way as things did in his “tracking room”.

“Holy fuck! It’s so cool!” Bev exclaimed again. This was starting to feel like she was on a loop. She ran towards Will’s screen and selected another beacon, and Stan’s form appeared next to Mike’s.

“Anyway,” Stan said, trying to get them back to the main point, “we have found several potential locations”. Stan walked towards Will’s screen and three red beacons appeared on their groups’ two locations and one spot Will didn’t recognize. “These are our locations. The third one is the location of the group Richie had met,” Stan explained. “I’ve searched for places that’s not crowded but not totally abandoned, to hopefully prevent things like last night from happening again”. A fourth red beacon appeared somewhere in the middle of the other three dots. “This place is a parking garage of a self storage. There will occasionally be people, but it won’t be too crowded. It’s also the closest to your group of all the locations I found”.

Stan created a second map of Hawkins, without the red and yellow beacons, but with hundreds of small blue dots. He zoomed in on the location of the garage and selected a dozen blue dots around it. Monitors appeared around them, showing the surveillance feed of the area.

“As you can see, there are civilians around, so they won’t be able to use heavy weapons or make a lot of noise if they want to keep us a secret,” Stan explained. “And since we have someone who can make tunnels, there will be plenty of options for escape routes”.

“So, how are we gonna contact the 3rd group?” Will asked. He liked this plan, and if they formed a big group, it’d be a lot harder to take them down — yesterday had been an example of that.

“Since Richie was the only one capable of going back and forth between us without the risk of being spotted, I was thinking we’d send him as a messenger,” Beverly said.

“I think we have a better option now,” Will smiled. “Bev, try to talk to Mike using that,” he looked at the Mike hologram. “And try to put his replies on speaker if you can”.

“Ooh, this is interesting,” Bev smiled mischievously before closing her eyes. Suddenly a small table appeared with a microphone and a pair of speakers. She held the mic to Will invitingly and he reluctantly took it. It was logical to choose someone who weren’t there with Mike, but Will didn’t really enjoy being the center of attention.

“Mike, can you hear me?” Will asked unsurely. He thought it would work but he couldn’t be sure.

Mike’s demeanor changed. He looked surprised and opened his mouth to say something, but as usual, no sound came out of the hologram. Will tried again.

“Mike, if you can hear me, I’m in your mind. You don’t have to reply verbally”.

“Will?” Mike voice rang from the speakers.

“Yes! It worked!” Bev exclaimed behind Will. “Hey Mike, it’s Bev. I’m here with Stan and Will, and we’ve just found a way to save your brother from having to fly around multiple times”.

Notes for the Chapter:

Hello guys! Sorry once again for the late update. The next update will probably be at the end of April, since I’m still quite busy this month. However, I’m planning to get things back to normal pace by May. Let’s just hope I succeed.

Now, continue with the Index:

024 : Hanscom, Benjamin: Power Manipulation (Level: Gamma - Type: Support)

- Power Negation: being able to negate others' ability and/or the effect of others
- Immutability: being immune to alterations

caused by others' abilities

- Power Detection: being able to detect abilities of others nearby and/or track others with abilities within range
- Power Amplification: being able to amplify the abilities of others upon contact
- Power Replication: being able to replicate the abilities of others upon contact

042 : Wheeler (née: Tozier), Michael: Flyrokinesis (Level: Beta, Alpha when amplified - Type: Defense)

- Force-Field Generation: being able to create force-field of various shapes to defend against attacks or contain threats
- Force-Field Attacks: combat integrating force-field
- Levitation: being able to levitate self or target by surrounding self/target with force-field

060 : Byers, William: Clairvoyance (Level: Alpha - Type: Espionage)

- Psychic Shield: increased resistance against psionic attacks
- Danger Intuition: being able to sense potential or impending danger to self and/or allies
- Dream Scrying: being able to see present events while dreaming
- Retrocognitive Dreaming: being able to see past events while dreaming
- Precognition: being able to see future events, may manifest as visions, Precognitive Dreaming, or Precognitive Artistry
- Astral Projection: being able to send consciousness to another plane
- Psychic Navigation: being able to find people anywhere in the world
- Visual Linking: being able to share sight between different individuals

Thanks for your support! Again, I'm sorry for the late update, and I hope you enjoyed this chapter.

Author's Note:

So, what do you think? Like it? Love it? Hate it? Found something I should improve? Let me know in the comment section.

I also would love to see how predictable I am, so please tell me how you think the story would go.

I'll probably update once every 2 weeks unless something happens.

If you want to ask me about extra information that I've decided not to reveal in this fic, or want to know if there's a delay in updating, or simply want to hear me rant sometimes, my Tumblr account is [@trashmouthdiangelo](#)